A

DISCOURSE

Concerning

GOD's Foreknowledge,

AND

Man's Free Agency:

WHEREIN

Their ſeeming Oppoſition is reconciled, and real Conſiſtency Demonſtrated from the Holy Scriptures, and Arguments thence deduced.

By J. Jackſon

Acts 4. 28. *For to do whatſoever thy hand and thy Counſel determined before to be done.*

Phil. 2. 12, 13. —— *Work out your own Salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleaſure.*

Deut. 30. 19. *I have ſet before you Life and Death, Bleſſing and Curſing; therefore chooſe Life,* &c.

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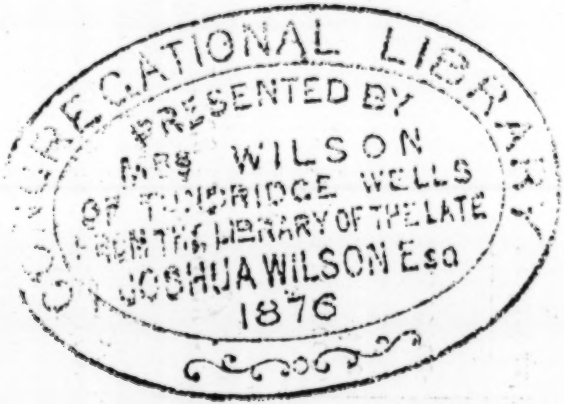
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The PREFACE.

IF *in the Peruſal of this ſmall Tract, the Reader finds but ſmall Satisfaction, I hope he will not much wonder at it, when he remembers, that Larger Volumes, and even Learned Ones too, in Matters eſpecially of this Nature, do not always anſwer Expectation. I pretend to no great ſhare of Learning, nor any large meaſure of Acute Judgment; only I am naturally diſpos'd to Thinking and Conſideration, and upon the Occaſion mentioned at the Entrance of the Enſuing Diſcourſe, which is no fictitious Pretence, but a thing that did really happen about two years agoe, I took a Fancy to ſet down my thoughts upon this abſtruſe Subject. Some few that have ſeen it in Manuſcript, have thought it to be tollerable Senſe, and might perhaps be a further Occaſion to ſome Man of better Parts to ſpeak more clearly to the Point, for which cauſe I am not unwilling to permit it's Publication; for I believe the Subject has not been hitherto exhauſted; and I deſire nothing more than to be out-done, or even confuted, by any one that can make things more coherent,*

and better vindicate the Divine Attributes.

In the mean time, * *I have met with a Curious Discourse concerning things above Reason, amongst which the Subject here treated of, is mention'd as one; by which I perceive, that this Essay of mine is not impertinent, tho' perhaps it may be ineffectual, and come far short of the Design. For how can an Unlearned Head (by never so much thinking) think to bring that under Reason, which so great a Wit hath ranked among things above it? So that the importance of the Attempt will not (I fear) account for the ill management of it: Yet its Innocency will (I hope) defend it from any heavy Censure. If I have not wholly subdu'd my Province unto Reason, yet I have given it a kind of Negative Voice; that is, tho' Reason cannot absolutely command the Affirmative, it shall nevertheless so far rule the Opposer, as to prevent his Negative. Some things must be granted, tho' perhaps not without difficulty, because they cannot be deny'd without far greater Inconvenience.*

If it be said, We cannot understand how any thing can be certain, and yet contingent; or how a voluntary Action can be foreseen, which depends upon Free-choice, and that at any

*By a Fellow of the R. S.

any time until it be effected, may be either done or let alone. Let ſuch Perſons try how they can clear the Inconveniencies of an Ignorant and Imperfect Deity, which will lye hard upon them if they grant not Divine Preſcience. On the other ſide, let them ſee with what ſucceſs they can take away diſtributive Juſtice, and root out the Notion and Exiſtence of Good and Evil; which task is of Neceſſity incumbent on them that deny Man to be a Free Agent. If things to come be not foreſeen, what will become of Divine Providence? If there be not in Man a free Election, where is ſin? for where there is no choice, how can any one chooſe amiſs? To chaſtiſe my Child for Diſobedience, would be all one as to whip my Clock for going amiſs. Either God Almighty foreſees things future, or he cannot be God: Either Man is a voluntary Agent, or he cannot be Man. If theſe things therefore will not ſtand together, Reaſon it ſelf may ſeem impertinent, and it's natural Concluſions altogether uſeleſs: For, to what purpoſe is Diſcourſe or Ratiocination, when either there can be no Tranſgreſſion, or none to take Notice of it, and puniſh it?

Theſe are the inconveniencies which men run the hazard of in this matter: For rather

than admit one apparent difficulty, which conſiſts perhaps only in the narrowneſs of humane underſtanding, they chooſe to fill the World with Contradiction and Abſurdity. Some will venture to mix Heaven and Earth together, under a State of War and Rapine, without any ſenſe of Divine Authority to Awe Rebellious Mankind; and others will attempt to turn God out of the World, becauſe they cannot comprehend his Perfections and Operations. But ſurely it is not adviſable to Caſhier every thing that puts a ſtreſs upon our limitted Faculties, nor run down all thoſe things for falſe, which conſiſt not well with what we apprehend to be true. To which purpoſe the Diſcourſe above mentioned contains a parcel of the Nobleſt Inſtances, apply'd and manag'd with the greateſt Clearneſs, and to the higheſt Ends and Advantage, of any Book I have hitherto met with. From thence I gladly learn, that there are certain Priviledg'd Things, which will by no means ſtoop to Common Reaſon, nor accommodate themſelves to thoſe Rules and Meaſures which are ſufficient for other Matters. Not but that there is a peculiar ſort of Reaſon in theſe alſo; for tho' they are above my Reaſon to apprehend them fully, yet I apprehend very good Reaſon why they ſhould be ſo. For, either my Capacity

is bounded, or it is not; if it be, 'tis ſure to be over-power'd in graſping an unlimitted thing; if not, it muſt then be infinite: And ſince I know many Capacities about the ſame Level with mine own, and not a few incomparably greater, it muſt follow, that, not only a multitude of infinites are conſiſtent, but a Number alſo of Capacities, each of which is more than infinite; which Concluſion I think is more than ſufficiently abſurd. Beſides, ſince God cannot do what is inconſiſtent, or involves a Contradiction, he could not create a Power or Faculty, comprehenſive of his own Perfections; for that could be no leſs than infinite. he cannot parcel out his peculiar Attributes unto his Creatures; for that would imply a contradiction. Wherefore the moſt ſhallow Reaſon may conclude, there muſt of neceſſity be thoſe things, which the moſt refined Wit cannot adequately comprehend.

And this is ſo, not only in reference to the Divine Perfections, but in things alſo of a lower Nature, of which it may not be improper to inſert one inſtance in this place, whereby an undeniable Truth will appear to be attended with unaccountable difficulty. For the Enſuing Diſcourſe pretends not to anſwer all the Cavils that may be made againſt a Meridian Truth, (which yet like the Sun it

(if) hath some Obscurities; much less doth it undertake to make men see, who are either blind or shut their Eyes. But the design of it is, to assert from the Scriptures, the Truth of Divine Prescience, and of voluntary Election; to evince the necessity of admitting them both; to accommodate the seeming Opposition, and to point out some of those unconcluding Arguments, that mislead Men to apprehend an inconsistence where there is none. But in case I have not performed this with sufficient Strength and Clearness of Expression, it will not be forreign to the matter in hand, to shew by an instance, that somethings may not only be true, but are almost universally acknowledg'd, which yet how they can be so, is insuperably hard to be conceived.

And this shall be an instance which doth frequently occur to every one that is conversant about Decimal Numbers: Scarce any good Accomptant but understands, no learned man but will acknowledge the force of it. For you may have a small fraction, suppose of a farthing, or of a barley corn, not worth demanding, which yet cannot be deny'd to be infinitely Divisible; insomuch, that going about to find some determinate part of such a fraction, as $\frac{1}{3}$, $\frac{1}{7}$, or the like, you may indeed divide it according to Decimal Arithmetick, and you shall presently

preſently come near the truth, and the further you continue your Diviſion, you ſhall ſtill come the nearer: But though you Divide it everlaſtingly, you ſhall never be able to get out entirely the part you aim at, but the Quotient will ſtill be defective, and ſomething will for ever remain of the Dividend.

To make out this the more evidently, I put the following Caſe for an Example: Seven Workmen are to receive for ſome piece of Work 20 s. *to be equally divided amongſt them; and ſuppoſing my ſelf to be one of the ſeven, I demand my ſhare; but firſt I am to compute what it comes to. To do this, I make uſe of Decimals, which in many Queſtions are very expeditious, and much in uſe at this day. It is no more but only to divide* 20 *by* 7. *But ſince there is a remainder, I add Cyphers to the Dividend, and ſo continuing the Diviſion to four places. I find in the Quotient this mixt Number,* 2. 8. 5. 7. *which comes to* 2 s. 10 d. 1 q. *and ſomething more, which is a ſolution exact enough for common practice.*

20 (2.8.5.7
14
60
56
54
35
50
49
1

But this is not all; for there remains one of the Dividend, that is to ſay, one thouſandth part of a Shilling, and of this I demand $\frac{1}{7}$, *to make up my full proportion of the* 20 s. *I*

there

there ſtill proceed to Divide, in order to get out my ſeventh part exactly, but I ſhall never be able to do it; no, though the Diviſion were to be continued from Age to Age for one thouſand years, and after that for another, yet ſtill the Quotient would be too little, and the Dividend inexhauſtible.

In this plain and familiar Queſtion, reſolv'd by Decimals, three things are evident. 1. *That in a few minutes time an anſwer may be given, tho' not exact, yet ſufficiently true for common uſe; that is to ſay, in half an hour at moſt, I may ſafely aver it, that ſo much is my full ſhare, within leſs than one Millioneth part of a farthing; and yet at the ſame time, I may be ſworn, that the ſame is not my proportion exactly.*

2. *Let me continue the Diviſion as far, and as long as I pleaſe, I ſhall come nearer ſtill and nearer to the truth, and every new figure in the Quotient, adds ſomething to my ſhare, which I had not before; it leſſens the Dividend and approaches by various (or rather infinite) degrees nearer to* $\frac{1}{7}$, *which is the proportion aimed at. But*

3. *It can never be accompliſht; Myriads of Ages would not ſuffice to drain this Fountain. You may ſuppoſe (if you pleaſe) the Quotient to be extended in Decimal Fractions, as far as from*

from the Artick to the Antartick Pole; all that would not reach a true ſeventh part, tho' every figure (as I ſaid) advances ſomething towards it.

Let us now lay all this together, here is a Mark to be hit, as ſuppoſe it were a Jack lying in a Bowling-Alley, you may aim at it, and preſently come within an hair's breadth, your Bowl may be ſtill in motion, and every moment come nearer to the Mark, and yet ſhall never touch it.

This Example in Arithmetick ſeems to conclude no leſs than thoſe two other Noted Curioſities in Geometry, concerning the Hyperbole and Diagonal, and has a reſpective Affinity to them both. For whereas the Hyperbole, may have ſuch a Relation to a right line drawn near it, that both being prolonged, it ſhall come nearer and nearer to the ſaid right Line; yet how far ſoever both lines be extended, they ſhall never meet; this is very nearly reſembled in the caſe before us. And whereas it is impoſſible to aſſign any common Meaſure for the Side and Diagonal of a Square, which ſhall exactly meaſure them both, but there will remain a part of the one line, leſs than the ſaid common meaſure, after you have made that as little as you pleaſe: So here, it is impoſſible to exhauſt Decimal Numbers by ſevens, be-

cauſe

cauſe that 7. *and* 10. *(or any number conſiſting of* 1. *with the Addition of Cyphers) are ſo far incommenſurable, that nothing above an Unit can be a common Meaſure to them both. To conclude, from this plain and familiar inſtance, may be inferred the endleſs Diviſibility of matter, that the Parts of any thing exceed the whole, and that the whole Globe of Earth is no further diviſible, nor can not be ſaid to contain a greater Number of Parts, than one ſmall grain of Sand.*

Now if there be ſuch a myſterious depth in Lines and Numbers, ſuch a boundleſs Abyſs in any ſmall particle of Earth or Clay, that the Wit of Man cannot comprehend it, what ſhall we ſay of him that made all things in Number, Weight and Meaſure? How can we excuſe the audacious folly of pretending to meaſure Eternity by the unequal ſtandard of our Judgment, or Circumſcribe infinity within the narrow Circl of Humane Capacity? Wherefore if the Reader ſhall diſlike the following Diſcourſe, and the Reaſons therein made uſe of, let him for his own ſatisfaction (and for mine too, if he pleaſe) bethink himſelf of better, and therein he may do a piece of ſervice, both uſeful and acceptable. But for any one to confine the ineffable perfections of the Supreme Being to his own faculties, is a piece of egregious vanity, and an undertaking altogether deſperate.

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GOD's Foreknowledge,

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Man's Free Agency.

I Happened a while ago, to be preſent at a Diſcourſe between two Gentlemen, concerning the fatal Period of Man's Life, or the fixed certainty of Future Events: The one affirming it, from the conſideration of God's Foreknowledge; the other denying it, from the evident certainty of Man's Free-will. The former urged; what God Foreſees, cannot but come to paſs; the latter pleaded, Man cannot chooſe, nor refuſe, the doing of that, which is certain to be done. I thought there was truth in what they both grounded their Arguments upon, but certain inferences, pretended to be drawn from thence, which this Diſcourſe produced

duced, I could by no means approve of, I did therefore interpoſe a little for an accommodation, but with ſo ill ſucceſs, that I have a mind to try, if I can do any better in this Paper. Not that I will preſume to moderate betwixt two Perſons, each of them better Learned, and of far greater Abilities than my ſelf. But ſince their Diſcourſe hath ſo fix'd the Subject in my mind, that I cannot eaſily remove it, I will only attempt to clear the Notion a little to my own Apprehenſion, by ſetting my thoughts in ſome kind of order in reference to this matter. I ſhall therefore endeavour theſe three things.

1. To aſſert from Scripture, that God foreſees future Events; and that nevertheleſs, Man is a free and voluntary Agent.

2. To ſhew, how theſe two things agree together; and detect the fallacy of thoſe Reaſonings that repreſent them inconſiſtent.

3. To anſwer ſome of thoſe Objections, that are wont to occur in this Debate.

I begin with the firſt, and eaſieſt part of my Task, namely, to aſſert God's Foreknowledge, and Man's Free-will, out of the Scriptures. Theſe are indeed two ſeveral ſubjects, and might challenge each of them

them a diſtinct Head of Diſcourſe: yet I rather choſe to manage them both in one, by linking Scriptures together in ſuch ſort, that of each couple, the one ſhall make out Divine Preſcience, and the other Humane Freedom; and being conſider'd together, ſhall evince, that both theſe have oft-times been converſant about the ſame particular event; that is, one Text ſhall prove God's Fore-knowledge *of*, and another ſhall evidence Mans Freedom *in*, doing or refuſing the ſame individual Action.

But firſt, that I may clear my way as much as I can, I muſt explain the Terms, or give ſome account, at leaſt, how I underſtand them. Some indeed except againſt the word Preſcience, and tell us, that God doth not properly fore-ſee any thing, ſince he beholdeth all things as preſent; but this I count is Criticiſm without Neceſſity; for the word is frequently uſed, as 'tis taken in this Diſcourſe, and is proper enough with reſpect unto us, and to ſuch things as are not yet in being. What ſhall be a thouſand years hence, is indeed potentially in God, but not yet actually exiſtent: So that his knowledge of ſuch things, is not unfitly called Preſcience, as

alſo

alſo the reſpect and conſideration of ſomewhat that is diſtant, is called Providence. Now as God's Omnipotence did vertually comprehend from Eternity, all the Creatures that were to be produced in Time; So his Omniſcience gives him an entire View and Proſpect of all their Actions. They cannot act but by a Power derived from him; how then ſhould they do any thing unknown to him? He knows what himſelf will bring to paſs in ſpite of all oppoſition; and he knows what Latitude he will allow his Creatures in their Actions. Since therefore God Almighty knows his own Will, and ſince Nothing can ever come to paſs without his Will, either poſitive or permiſſive; it muſt follow, that he ſees and knows all things and events, which are to come, and not yet actually exiſtent, with equal certainty as if they were preſent. And this is what I mean by Divine Preſcience.

I muſt now fix my Notion of Free-will, and herein I ſhall carefully avoid all School Controverſies about it, or about Common and Efficacious Grace: As alſo thoſe Dominican Fancies about a thing they call * *Next Power*, which is next to none, and

* *Prov. Letters.*

and Sufficient Grace, which ſome think altogether inſufficient. Theſe and ſuch like queſtions I leave to be beaten into Atoms between the Jeſuites and Janſeniſts.

And whereas ſome contend, that it is in every Man's power to do what the Goſpel enjoyns: For ſhould God require of any man what is impoſſible to be done by him, he muſt needs appear to be a hard Maſter.

Others deny that any man can, or ever will effectually believe and repent without ſpecial Grace, which wherever it comes, makes a thorow work of Converſion in the heart, and therefore can never be loſt, nor the perſon in whom it is finally miſcarry.

Others again ſay, there is a ſufficiency of Grace, which with pious endeavours will bring a Man to happineſs, yet under a poſſibility of Apoſtatizing, in which caſe God may and doth ſometimes relinquiſh the Perſon to final Deſtruction.

And others, to name no more, ſay, there is a Common Grace, or Univerſal Talent given to all Men, which tho' of it ſelf, it is by no means ſufficient, yet upon a conſcientious improvement thereof, with earneſt Prayer for further daily Supplies, it will pleaſe God to beſtow ſuch a

Meaſure, as ſhall be ſufficient to Salvation; whilſt thoſe who were intruſted with the ſame ſtock, having laid it up in a Napkin, are through their own Default, utterly ruin'd. Yet they add withal, that there are a certain Number, more peculiarly called *the Elect*, whom Efficacious Grace does ſeize upon, ſome in a high Carreer of Wickedneſs, others at firſt even againſt their Will, tho' in the day of Gods Almighty Power, they become a willing People, to that degree, that they deſire nothing more than to lay out their lives, to ſpend and be ſpent (as St. *Paul* ſaid) for the advancement of that Grace and Truth whereby they are ſubdu'd and purified: But theſe (they ſay) are not the Rule and Meaſure of God's dealing with Mankind in general, but are to be look't upon, as certain high and noble Inſtances of the Freeneſs and Efficacy of Divine Grace, and of God's exerciſing an Almighty Prerogative in chooſing a Raging Perſecutor, or ſome Atheiſtical Debauchee, to be made a peculiar Favorite and choſen Veſſel to himſelf.

Whereas (I ſay) there are theſe (and perhaps ſome other) Opinions, that are wont to fall under conſideration, when the buſi-

buſineſs of Free-will is in debate; I ſhall not trouble my ſelf to determine which is beſt, nor is it material to my deſign: 'Tis not impoſſible, but with a due Reſpect unto Perſons, Times and Circumſtances, there may be ſomething of Truth in them all, and each of them perhaps may be good or bad, according as 'tis manag'd. Truth and Errour I look upon as Gold and Droſs: The one is a pure and ſplendid thing, but may be adulterated or abuſed, and ſeldom is without alloy; the other, tho' baſe and ignoble, contains for the moſt part ſomething of true mettal, if duly ſeparated from the reſt.

This only (under ſubmiſſion) I ſhall adventure to ſay as my own preſent thoughts about this matter, and ſo proceed; namely, that moſt men, however under a ſtate of Nature, may do much moral good, which ſhall not paſs unrewarded, and ſomething too (for ought they can know to the contrary) towards acceptance with God. That many men through the Divine Goodneſs ſhall be ſaved, that neither know punctually the time of their Converſion, nor certainly whether they be converted or not. That few there are who attain to that compleat aſſurance, as to baniſh all

all times, all manner of Dubitation. That it is all mens duty to ſeek that they may find, and to wait upon God in the uſe of thoſe means appointed by him in his word; and we have his promiſe for ſucceſs. And, that no man can truly ſay now, or ſhall be able to plead at the laſt day, that he hath uſed his utmoſt endeavours, and found them unſucceſsful. Theſe and the like conſiderations may be ground enough for men to be doing good at preſent, and for their Relyance upon the Goodneſs of God for the future. But on the other hand, ſince there is a ſpiritual as well as a fleſhly Wickedneſs, and Satan is transform'd ſometimes into an Angel of Light, and leſt Man ſhould be lifted up with an apprehenſion of certain fine things that he can do; let him remember, that 'tis God who worketh in him both to will and to do of his good pleaſure; that of himſelf he can do nothing, and that all his righteouſneſs is but filthy raggs. And this will help to poiſe him at the Center between the two Extreams of ſainting and preſuming, and will diſcover a neceſſity of an humble attendance at the Throne of Grace, that God would ſupply unto him thoſe Divine Aids, and Spiritual Powers, by which he may

may be enabled to encounter oppoſition, and find acceptance in Chriſt Jeſus.

And herein perhaps may conſiſt the narrowneſs of the way that leads to life. For one man, ſuppoſing he can do nothing acceptable to God, reſolves to take his eaſe, until the Spirit, that Wind which bloweth where it liſt, breath upon him; another thinks he is able and willing, to do all that God requires; he admires his own good husbandry in the improvement of his Talent, and thanks God, he is not like other men. Now the way lying in the middle betwixt theſe Extremities, the leaſt ſtep towards a Carnal Liberty one the one hand, or a Phariſaical Righteouſneſs on the other, muſt needs be a deviation from the right path, as this collateral Diſcourſe is a digreſſion from what I intend. But I now return, and do ſay, that let men eſtabliſh what Doctrine they pleaſe concerning Grace, it will not import the matter in hand, ſince I ſhall confine my Notion of Free-Will to thoſe things that are on all hands acknowledged to be within Man's power, ſuppoſing only the ordinary concurrence of God's providence thereunto.

I conſider then, that Man above other Creatures hath knowledge to judge and diſtin-

diſtinguiſh of things commodious or inconvenient, beneficial or noxious to him, in the concerns of his Life; and it would be a ſtrange Solæciſm in Nature, if he had not the Liberty of chooſing the one, and refuſing the other. What doth it advantage a Man, to know the difference between a Sheep and a Wolf, if he want the Power or the Will, to make a benefit of the one, and avoid the miſchief of the other? Nay I do not ſee, but this might render Man of all Creatures moſt miſerable, ſince his knowledge of Good could be no other to him than Gall and Bitterneſs; whilſt he finds himſelf fatally carried on to Evil. And ſuppoſe he had been always predetermined to Good, his knowledge of Evil then had been in vain, or rather indeed it had been impoſſible; ſince Man could not have come to the knowledge of Evil, but by doing it. And what could Man under a neceſſity of always doing good, ſignifie, more than a good Watch? which tho' it moves regularly, yet is it altogether involuntary, cannot do otherwiſe, knows not that it moves at all; and conſequently is incapable of Praiſe or Encouragement, Reward or Puniſhment. Thus if we take away from Man his Faculties of Judging and

Chooſing

Chooſing, we make the Lord of the Creation the moſt contemptible thing in Nature, and put him under the Feet of thoſe Brutes he was made to rule over. So that without voluntary Agency, that is, without a Will and the proper Exerciſe thereof, Man becomes little better than a Senſleſs Machine.

But now on the contrary, we ſee plainly, that, by the good Providence and Diſpoſal of Almighty God, men have power to do many things, as namely, to cultivate the Earth, to build Houſes, to provide againſt Hunger and Cold, to educate their Children, to exerciſe ſeveral Arts and Trades, for the Benefit of Humane Life, and to manage all theſe according to certain Rules, Methods and Obſervations, ariſing partly from Experience, and partly from Mens conſulting one another. I ſay, in all theſe, and a thouſand more particulars, Men do conſider and deliberate, and then purſue their ſeveral Deſigns, ſome with greater, others with a leſſer ſhare of Prudence, but each Imploying his Meaſure, and accordingly determining to chooſe this, and refuſe the other.

In ſhort, I conceive, that God having indued Man with an Underſtanding to judge,

judge, and a Will to chooſe, and continually ſupplying him with power to act according to his Nature, he doth not ordinarily over-power, or impel his Faculties, but leaves him to the free Uſe and Exerciſe thereof in things within his proper Sphere. And this is what I mean by Free-will. Now I addreſs to my Province, which is to aſſert this, together with God's Fore-knowledge of future Events from the Scriptures.

The firſt pair of Scriptures that I imploy for this Service, ſhall be out of *Exodus*, * where *Moſes* is appointed of God to go unto *Pharaoh*, and ſay unto him, *Let us go, we beſeech thee, into the Wilderneſs, &c.* It is not eaſily to be imagined, but that *Pharaoh* had power to have granted this Requeſt at firſt, and the very Requeſt it ſelf doth ſtrongly imply a Liberty of granting it. No good Maſter will require any thing of his meaneſt Servant, with intention to puniſh him ſeverely for not doing it, and yet ſecretly contrive means to prevent and diſable him, that he cannot do it. To ſay, that God ſhould ſend *Moſes* to make a requeſt unto *Pharaoh*, ſaying, *Let us go, we pray thee*, that he ſhould deſtroy

* Chap. 3. 18. Chap. 5. 1.

deſtroy him at laſt for refuſing, and in the mean time ſhould bind up his heart by ſome irreſiſtable influence, from all poſſibility of granting it: This would not only excuſe *Pharaoh* from the guilt of ſin, but make an odious repreſentation of the Ever bleſſed God; as if his Wiſdom were exercis'd in laying ſnares for the innocent, and his power in their deſtruction. Should a Writing-Maſter guide his Scholars hand, to make a blot, or ſome ill Character, and then beat him for it, whereas being left to himſelf he would have done better, what could be thought of ſuch behaviour in a Maſter? and how juſt would be the Scholar's indignation againſt him?

The ſinfulneſs of an Action conſiſts in this, that it is voluntary, and againſt the Command; the nature of a voluntary action is, that 'tis done out of choice and deliberation, when otherwiſe it might be forborn. Now, either *Pharaoh* ſinn'd in detaining the People, or he did not; if not, wherefore was he deſtroy'd? * *Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* If he did, he acted out of Choice, and conſequently he might have diſmiſſed the *Iſraelites* ſooner, if he had pleaſed. Hence it will alſo follow, that there

* Gen. 18. 2

could be no ſecret Influence, nor any predetermining Concourſe from God, to bind his Faculties, or take away his Free-agency; only the Pride of his Heart, deſpiſing God's Meſſage to him, and his domineering Ambition to keep the People in Slavery, did out-weigh (in his unjuſt Ballance) the other Motives he had to diſpenſe with them.

And herein conſiſteth the nature of Election, that of two things propoſed, with Motives on either part, a man freely chooſeth that which likes him beſt, in his preſent Apprehenſion, tho' at the ſame time (if he thought good) he might chooſe the other. Thus did *Pharaoh* chooſe to detain the People, there's his Choice; yet before ever the matter was propounded to him, God himſelf ſays, * *I am ſure he will not let you go*; here is *Fore-knowlege*: Therefore Divine Preſcience and Humane Liberty are conſiſtent, and have been converſant about the ſame individual Action.

But here an Objection may ariſe from the ſeventh Chapter, and the third verſe, where God ſays, † *He will harden Pharaoh's heart*: From whence it might be ſuppoſed, that *Pharaoh* could not act voluntarily, nor be ſaid to have any real Freedom of Will. To this I anſwer, 1. I

* Exod. 3. 19. † Exod. 7. 3.

1. I will not deny, but that in consideration of *Pharaoh*'s former Wickedness, in dealing so barbarously with the People of *Israel*, God might forsake him, and give him over to hardness of Heart. But then,

2. I deny that this hardness of heart, by whomsoever, or in what manner so ever it was wrought, could deprive him of the Liberty of doing a Civil Act within his power. He might for some self End, or with some ill design, have dismissed the *Israelites*, and yet still have retained his hard heart; it was but a word speaking, and the business had been done. And it is observable, that while the smart was upon him, he could say, * *I and my People are wicked*; and promised too, to let the *Israelites* go; but still, as he found respite, (thinking perhaps the storm was over) he retracted. On the one hand, there was the danger of perishing, or having at least) his Kingdom ruin'd by those Judgments God sent upon him: On the other hand, there was the lust of tyrannizing over an enslaved People, and the benefit of their Labours in making Brick. These two weights being opposed each to other in the Scales, sometimes the one, and then presently the other preponderates. And

* Exod. 9. 27, 28.

this purely is deliberation, the result whereof is chooſing, and chooſing is the undoubted property of a free Agent.

3. Concerning the hardening of *Pharaoh*'s heart, the Apprehenſions of Learned Men are different; that which to me appears the moſt reaſonable is to this effect, namely, that this induration is not to be underſtood as any poſitive Act, or immediate Efficiency from God, whereby *Pharaoh*'s heart was made hard, (much leſs his Will Predetermin'd) directly and properly, no more than it is to be underſtood that our Saviours coming was directly and properly to fill the World with Diſſentions, becauſe he himſelf ſaith expreſly, that * *He came not to bring peace on the Earth, but rather diviſion.* The primary intention of the Goſpel, no doubt, was *Peace and Good Will towards men*; but meeting with various tempers, and ſundry degrees of Corruption in the hearts of men, it could not chooſe but occaſion diſſention and a ſword upon the Earth. In like manner the primary intention of God's Judgments, is to reform the World, and bring men to Repentance, whilſt in ſome Perſons they have a quite contrary effect. So that, as the Goſpel of Peace

* Luke 12. 51, 52.

Peace was the accidental cauſe of War, ſo might God's dealing with *Pharaoh* tend to harden his Heart, and yet to ſoften a leſs rebellious one, as the ſame Sun beam melteth Wax and hardeneth Clay. And *as ſin by the commandment becomes exceeding ſinful,* * *in ſo much that the Commandment it ſelf, which was ordained unto life, is found to be unto death:* So *Pharaoh*'s ſtubborneſs, under the Divine Hand, becomes the more exceeding ſtubborn; and that Chaſtiſement, which was ordained unto Reformation, did the more effectually promote his deſtruction. Hence it is highly probable, that, *I will harden his heart,* may import no more than this, I will bring ſuch things to paſs, and in ſuch a manner, as ſhall through his own Corruptions, render him much more obdurate.

That the natural and direct tendency of God's dealing with *Pharaoh* was to convince him, ſeems very apparent from theſe Conſiderations: 1. He orders *Moſes* to try him with Innocent Miracles, afterwards with ſmarting ones, by ſuch degrees, till it come at laſt to the death of his Firſt-born. 2. While the Plagues lay heavy upon him, he gave ſome ſigns of a yielding and re-

* Rom. 7. 11, 13.

lenting temper, but ever in the Intervals he contracted a greater obdurateneſs. 3. The Judgments of God had their proper Effect upon the *Egyptians*, ſo far, that they would gladly have the *Iſraelites* diſmiſſed ſooner, and at laſt, were not only urgent to have them gone in haſte, but willing to part with their * Jewels into the bargain. Theſe conſiderations (I ſay) ſeem very much to favour the forementioned ſenſe of the Place, but whether that be the only true meaning of it, I ſhall not contend, ſo long as I can make it good, that *Pharaoh* was a Free Agent in that particular thing which was foretold by God Almighty.

The next double Teſtimony ſhall be out of † *Ezekiel*, where the Prophet is ſent to the *Iſraelites*, and words put into his Mouth, to warn and dehort them from their wicked ways, leſt they ſhould dye. Hence I argue thus; either the Houſe of *Iſrael* might have obeyed God's meſſage to them by the Prophet, or elſe not: If not, how ſhall we clear the ſincerity of God's dealings with them? Or will his meſſage to them appear any more than a Complement? Let us have a Care of intrenching upon Blaſphemy. But, if they might have humbled themſelves at the

* Exod. 12. 33, 35. † Ezek. 3. 4.

the Prophet's voice, as *Nineveh* did in the like caſe, it will follow, that they were not by any previous neceſſity diveſted of their *Liberum Arbitrium*, as is alſo evident from theſe words ſo often repeated in the Prophet's Commiſſion, *Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear?* which is as much as to ſay, they have their free choice. And what follows? * *But the Houſe of Iſrael will not hearken unto thee.* God doth not only afford Liberty and Opportunity of Repentance, but he urges the ſame by ſtrong pleadings and inducements; and yet at the ſame time, he foreſees a contrary Event. And this is what I undertook to aſſert from the Scriptures.

Again, in the *5th.* of *Hoſea*, † God foretells, that *Iſrael* and *Ephraim* ſhall fall in their iniquity, *Judah* alſo ſhall fall with them; yet in the *6th. Chapter* ‖ he exhorts to Repentance. This indeed might have its proper effect too, upon ſome ſmall remnant that ſhould eſcape (*a*) and remember God among the Nations whither they were to be carried captives. But now there is the ſame means afforded to thoſe that ſhould fall in their Iniquity, as to the few that ſhould eſcape; nor doth God's Fore-know-

* Ezek. 3. 7. † Hoſ. 5. 5. ‖ Hoſ. 6. 1. (*a*) Ezek. 6. 8, 9.

ledge of the ſeveral Events impoſe a neceſſity upon either. He grants Liberty unto both, which he knows a Remnant will make good uſe of, whilſt the greater Number will abuſe it to their ruin. Thus it is evident, that Liberty and Preſcience are conſiſtent.

It is moreover propheſied, that by * reaſon of Idolatry, they ſhall be as Chaff driven with a whirlewind out of the Floor, and as ſmoke out of the Chimney; yet afterwards, we read in the ſame Chapter, *O Iſrael thou haſt deſtroyed thy ſelf.* We do not uſe to ſay, a man deſtroys himſelf, that is unwillingly run down by external force, or ſome inevitable neceſſity; nor can he that ruines himſelf charge the fault upon another. If *Iſrael* deſtroys himſelf, he is ſurely the Agent of his own deſtruction; and if ſo, he is either a Voluntary or an Involuntary Agent; if Involuntary, he cannot be ſaid to deſtroy himſelf, no more than a Houſe burns it ſelf when fire is ſet to it by an Incendiary. An Involuntary Agent, as a Sword or a Hammer, can only act as 'tis mannag'd by Hands, and thoſe govern'd by the Will. It remains then, that *Iſrael* was the voluntary Agent of his own Ruine; and ſince

* Hoſea 13. 1. † Hoſea 13. 9.

ſince this is foretold of God by the Prophet, it muſt follow (if the Scriptures be true) that Divine Preſcience doth not any way infringe the Liberty, or Free-agency of rational Creatures.

God foreſaw, that wicked Hands would be forward enough to deliver up the Divine Perſon unto Death, who was the * Lord of Life; nay, his determinate Counſel did concur with his Fore-knowledge, ſo far as to let it proceed to Execution, as the Learned Mr. *Howe* obſerves. And our Saviour † himſelf, not only deſcribes particularly the manner and circumſtances of his own Death, when yet it was not near at hand, but is ſaid alſo to ‖ *know all things* that ſhould come upon him. Yet if the Actors of this wickedneſs had been rightly informed what they were about, they would have left their work for other hands. That's very ſtrange (ſays one of our Diſputants) here is an Event ſecur'd by the determinate counſel of God, here is the place where, the manner how, and the Perſons by whom it ſhould be brought to paſs, deſcrib'd before hand by our Saviour; can any thing that is ſo infallibly certain admit of an If? Yes, in St. *Paul*'s account it may, and he is a perſon that deſerves

* Act. 2. 23. † Mat. 20. 17. ‖ Jo. 18. 4.

ſerves ſome regard. And indeed, his Aſſertion will appear highly reaſonable, when we conſider the Princes of this World, ſo ſadly miſinformed as they were, and impos'd upon by all the wicked Artifice imaginable, yet we do not find them very eager to be concern'd in the Blood of that juſt perſon, when the principal Agent pretends * to waſh his hands of it, and profeſſes † he found no cauſe of death in him. And had it not been for the impetuous Clamours of a wretched People, and the danger of a Tumult, 'tis probable that the malicious contrivance of the Prieſts, and their ſham Evidence, would not have weighed againſt *Pilate*'s Native Clemency. What muſt we then think had been done, in caſe of a right information? Why the Apoſtle tells us; ‖ *Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.* This puts it out of all doubt, that they were under no other force than the Reſult of their own Deliberation. On the one hand, there was the meekneſs of the Priſoner, the clemency of the Judge, and the diſagreement of the Witneſſes: On the other hand, there was the influence of the Prieſts, the ignorance of the Court, and cries of the Multitude; which kept

* Mat. 27. 24. † Luke 23. 22. ‖ 1 Cor. 2. 8.

kept the buſineſs for a while in *Equilibrio*, but then the fear of a tumult ſuperadded, caſt the Scales. Nor were they under any further Neceſſity of crucifying our Saviour, by means of ſuch a Divine Foreſight, that he ſhould be crucified, than they would have been under, in caſe it were to be ſuppoſed, that God had not ſo punctually foreſeen, or foretold the ſame.

There are many other places of Scripture, that do evidently prove there is in Man a free Election. *Solomon* is commended for asking Wiſdom, * when he might have asked Riches, length of Days, or Revenge upon his Enemies; and *Ananias* † is the more condemned for falſity about the price of the Land, becauſe that even after it was ſold, it was in his own power.

‖ *If a Wife make a Vow, it is left to her Husbands choice, either to eſtabliſh it, or to make it void.*

(a) *Chooſe you this day whom you will ſerve.*

(b) *Go and ſay unto David, thus ſaith the Lord, I offer thee three things; chooſe thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee.*

Theſe Scriptures are ſo clear, they need no Commentary, nor do they admit of any Ob-

* 1 Kings 3. 1. † Act. 4. 5. ‖ Num. 30. 1. (a) Joſ. 24. 15. (b) 2 Sam. 24. 12.

Objection. And I think there is no leſs Evidence for Divine Preſcience, ſince all Prophecies and many other Places of Scripture, do either directly, or by juſt conſequence put it beyond Diſpute, with all that acknowledge the Authority of that ſacred Book. I ſhall mention no more but this one, and therewith cloſe up this firſt part of my Undertaking: It is ſo direct and full to the purpoſe, as if the Holy Ghoſt had deſign'd it to remove all Scruple and Heſitation about that matter. * *I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done.*

Had I Leaſure now, or Opportunity, to conſult the Fathers or Schoolmen; I am inclinable to believe, I ſhould have their general Suffrage in this matter; but truly thoſe Gentlemen are none of my Familiars, and and I was loath to trouble them. Yet meeting by accident with two of them, which are eſteemed no leſs than Oracles, I made bold to ask them their Opinions in the caſe. I confeſs, I was not diſpleaſed to find them ſo very civil, and favourable to the Notions, I had already formed, and in part written down, concerning this Subject. One of theſe

* Iſa. 36. 9.

theſe was the Learned *Suarez*, who firſt of all diſputing copiouſly about Man's capacity of acting freely, he brings it laſt to this iſſue: * *Experimur enim evidenter, ſitum eſſe in noſtra poteſtate aliquid agere vel omittere, & ad hoc utimur ratione & diſcurſu ac conſultatione, ut in unam partem potius quàm in aliam inclinemur: Eſt ergo Electio poſitiva in noſtro arbitrio, alioqui fuiſſet nobis data ſuperfluè, hæc deliberandi & conſultandi vis. For we find by evident Experience, that it is in our power either to do a thing or leave it undone, therefore we reaſon, argue and deliberate, in order to chooſe one thing rather than another, 'tis therefore in our power to make a poſitive choice, or elſe we have this Capacity given us in vain.* This comes cloſe to that point. And then in the next place, he doth no leſs vigorouſly maintain God's Fore-knowledge of all Events and Actions, whether voluntary, or contingent, the Sum of which is thus.

† "God cannot (ſaith he) be ignorant "of what he himſelf doth, or will do, be- "cauſe he knows his own Will and his "power to effect what he wills. Nor can "can he be ignorant of what his Creatures "do now, or what they ſhall do hereafter, "becauſe whatever is poſitively good in "their

* Metaph. Tom. 1. p. 338, 339. † Tom. 2. p. 92, 93.

"their Actions, is by immediate influence "from himself; and what there is of pri- "vation or defect, cannot be without his "permission, and therefore he cannot be "ignorant of mens sinful and wicked acti- "ons. He goes on to shew, that unless God "did fore-know from Eternity whatever "was, or is to come to pass in time, he "could neither be omnipotent nor immu- "table. Not omnipotent, because in refe- "rence to those things whereof he had no "foresight, his Providence and Govern- "ment of Affairs must needs be defective. "Not Immutable, because something must "daily occur to his knowledge which he "knew not before.

Atque hinc sequitur Deum habere hanc Scientiam Creaturarum quæ fiunt in tempore ex æternitate sua, ut totam illam simul habeat sine successione, quia non potest in se variationem admittere; item quia non posset Deus habere perfectam providentiam in rebus administrandis, nisi haberet omnium præscientiam. Thus far that Eminent Schoolman.

The other is the Angelical *Thomas Aquinas*, as some are pleased to style him. He in his *Sum of Theology* dispatches me in a few words. For having first described Providence to be a respect to somewhat that is distant, ac-

according to which the occurrences now preſent are to be ordered, which doth therefore neceſſarily include preſcience: He ſaith afterwards, *Providentia Dei eſt omnium ſingularium, nec tamen à rebus excludit contingentiam, nec caſum, nec fortunam, nec liberum arbitrium: That the Providence of God extendeth to all particulars, not excluding Contingency, Chance, Fortune, or Free-will.*

Add hereunto, that it was allowed St. *Auguſtine* as a Maxime, that *God by his foreknowledge, doth not neceſſitate, or conſtrain, the coming to paſs of the things foreknown by him.* Theſe Teſtimonies, as they are of unqueſtionable Authority, ſo are they clear, direct, and full to the purpoſe; and this is all I deſign for the firſt general Head.

I am now in the ſecond place to attempt certain reaſons, or conſiderations, whereby to accommodate the difference, or at leaſt to leſſen the oppoſition, that ſeems to be between Preſcience and Free-will. The Heads to be inſiſted on for that purpoſe are theſe three: Namely, *The truth of the Holy Scriptures, The Harmony of the Divine Attributes,* and *the Non-cauſality of Divine Preſcience.*

Firſt then, I argue from the verity of the Scriptures; for I am not deſigning to confute

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an Atheiſt, writing only to ſuch as do acknowledge the Truth and Authority of thoſe Sacred Letters; but chiefly (as I ſaid before) for my own ſatisfaction. Some young Divines indeed I have obſerved, who in their firſt ſetting out to preach the *Word*, affect to preach altogether without it, and ſeem to Triumph in diſpelling the darkneſs of Atheiſm and Irreligion, by the Gloworm-light of corrupt Nature. Others there are, that prove their Doctrines out of *Terence*, *Tully* and *Seneca*; whether it is, becauſe they have not read the Bible, or that they preſer the Authority of Heathen Writers before it, or that they would be thought to be profoundly learned, I ſhall not diſpute; but I find other more experienc'd Work-men, who do not trouble themſelves to dig below the true foundation, but think the Rock of Ages ſafe enough for them to build upon. Now, as that Comical ſort of Preaching, to vulgar Ears, doth rather Amuſe than Edifie: So this Eſſay (which is not like to be regarded by the Learned) if it ſhould happen to take the Country air, would look very thin without Scripture-Evidence. But if indeed the Scriptures do clearly ſpeak the Subſtance of what is herein contained, this ought to have the force of a Reaſon, with all thoſe that

that acknowledge the Authority of that Book. Nor will it be material to object, that this Argument doth not ſufficiently make out the reaſonableneſs of what is here pleaded for: For as there are ſeveral Ranks of Priviledg'd things, which will not condeſcend to Common Reaſon, ſo there are ſeveral degrees of Reaſon alſo, of which the lower ought to yield to the Superiour; and it is the higheſt reaſon ſure, that *God is true*, tho' every Man ſhould be found a Lyer.

I am by no means againſt it yet, that Atheiſm ſhould be encountred upon its own principles, if at leaſt it can be ſaid to have any principles at all; but every Stripling is not a fit Champion for an overgrown Philiſtine: And I had rather have that Province entirely left to ſuch as can manage it, than have the Truth to ſuffer by weak Patronage. As for thoſe therefore, that expect better proof than from the Word of God, and thoſe natural conſequences ariſing thence, I ſhall leave them to the diſcipline of their own Conſciences; for if they are not convinced by what Bp. *Wilkins*, Bp. *Ward*, Mr. *Boyle*, Dr. *Cudworth*, Sir *Cha. Wolſely*, and ſome others have already ſaid againſt Atheiſm, I ſhall never hope to give them ſatisfaction.

But as for thoſe two Gentlemen, betwixt

whom the Controverſie was ſtarted, upon which occaſion I ſcribble down theſe haſty Notes, they are both of them (I hope) ſerious Chriſtians, not doubting in the leaſt the truth of the Scriptures, yet differing vaſtly in their apprehenſions about this matter. One of them is firm in the belief of Divine Preſcience, but ſomewhat Heſitant as to the buſineſs of Free-will: The other is ſo much a Free-willer, that he ſeems to caſhier Divine Preſcience; "For (ſays he) if God "offer me any good thing, and knows in "the mean time I will not accept of it, I am "nothing beholding to him for his kind-"neſs.—

This manner of expreſſion concerning God, is over-bold and fawcy; for we may not ſpeak of him with ſuch a Liberty, as is allowable in other matters. Beſides, let us obſerve the conſequence, and we ſhall find it to be this, that either God Almighty has no knowledge at all of future Events; or elſe, that all conditional Promiſes, throughout the whole Scripture, are no more than ſhadows; the former of which conſequences ſtrikes at the Perfection of the Divine Nature, and the latter blurrs the ſincerity of the inſpired Writings. To which it may be added, that ſuch Doctrine is falſe, and inju-

injurious to the Goodneſs of God: For his Benefits offered to Mankind are not to be valued by his Fore-knowledge of Non-acceptance, but by their own intrinſick worth, and by Man's Capacity of enjoying them if he will. And tho' God doth aſſuredly know, who will not accept of his kindneſs, yet he knows at the ſame time, the fault is in themſelves; nor is their refuſal any further neceſſary from any ſuch Divine Foreſight, than otherwiſe it would have been. So that ſome Perſons will indeed ſeem to have a great Veneration for the Scriptures, and yet own ſuch Principles as render a great part of them inſignificant: For, if God's Fore knowledge neceſſitate all Events, ſo that nothing could have fallen out otherwiſe than it doth; then all Divine Precepts and Rules of Life, all Promiſes and Threatnings upon certain conditions, are no more but Cheats and empty Formalities. But now, to thoſe that ſincerely acknowledge the Divine Authority and Truth of the Scriptures, (as all Chriſtians ought to do) the Argument will lye thus:

What ever is entirely true, is alſo harmonious and ſelf-conſiſtent. But the Scriptures are true. *Ergo*, &c.

If it be urged, that the Scriptures, as proceeding from God, are indeed moſt perfectly and entirely true, yet paſſing through the hands of ſo many Men, in various Copies and Verſions, from one Language into another, it cannot be, but ſomething of humane infirmity muſt ſtick to them. This indeed I freely grant; and if any ſuch thing can be made evident in the caſe before us, it will be very fit to be conſidered. In the mean time, there can hardly any two things be named that are more clearly and vigorouſly aſſerted in Scripture, than are Divine Preſcience and Free-will, as well in the places above-mentioned, as in divers others. From whence it will follow, that if thoſe places of Scripture be genuine, and no way corrupted (which we muſt ſuppoſe, till the contrary be made out) God's Fore-knowledge and Man's Free-agency are not only true, but perfectly harmonious, and conſiſtent each with other, altho' our limitted ſight and dazled Eyes cannot fully enable us to behold their Agreement.

Nor need we wonder at it, when we conſider, that not only in the Scripture, but in *Euclid*'s *Elements*, and many other Books approved in their kind, are found divers things,

things, which a great number of Readers, tho' men of good Senſe, cannot eaſily underſtand or reconcile; and ſome things of that difficulty, that the greateſt Maſters of Learning and Reaſon, have more than work enough to overcome; of which, if need required, one might give particular Inſtances. Who will believe that the leaſt Diameter of a Needle's Point ſhould be Diviſible into a Million (or rather infinite) Parts, and yet that a Circle, how large ſoever, can touch a right line but in * one point only? And ſince a Globular Body ſet upon a plain, can reach the ſame but in one point, and a point is defined to be that, which hath no part, would it not be a ſtrange Paradox to ſay, † A Globe can touch a Plain in no part at all? Yet all this leans upon Mathematical Demonſtration.

It is eaſie to obſerve, that when any difficulty, or ſeeming oppoſition doth occur in Scripture, which common Readers cannot (and even Learned ones not very eaſily) reconcile; two ſorts of People, the Prophane and Superſtitious, take hold of it to very ill purpoſe; the one apprehends it their Intereſt to

* That is, the right line being drawn as a tangent, but not through the Circle.

† Eucl. def. 1 Lib. 3. prop. 36. Lib. 10. prop. 117.

to have no Religion at all, looks upon the Scripture as a State-contrivance to keep the World in Order and Subjection, and hence they assume a lewd Liberty of turning it into *Burlesque* and *Ridicule*; the other sort, being for the most part over eagerly devoted to some Party, have a Religion made up of a few Fractions of Truth, neglecting in the mean time the Sum and Substance. These men pursue, to the best advantage of their Sect, that part of Scripture which hath the kindest Aspect upon their espoused Notions, and run it off from the main Body of Truth, to that Extream, that it becomes an Errour in Doctrine, and perhaps too a Rent in the Church. For the Body of Truth may not unfitly be resembled to the Body natural, which cannot live in pieces.

That there are unchangeable Decrees of God, I do not doubt; but if that Doctrine be so manag'd as to evacuate Men's Endeavours, this surely is an unwarrantable Extream. Justification by Faith is a great truth; but if it be imprudently carried to that height, as to exclude, or make men neglect a good Life, it will become a dangerous Errour. That Christ dy'd for all, is a glorious Truth, as it is laid down in Scripture; but if some stretch that Doctrine to the actu-

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al *Salvation of all Men*, and others thereupon put the whole Buſineſs of Salvation within *Man's power*, theſe doubtleſs are vitious Extreams, opening a wide paſſage for Pride or Prophaneneſs. The one makes Religion altogether vain, and the other makes the Grace of God not worth looking after. So that whilſt Men run into ſuch violent Extremities, they ſeem to tear off ſome particular Truths from their Unity with the whole, which from thence forward turn into Corruption, whilſt the main Body of Truth is deſerted by them, and becomes uſeleſs.

And this is the caſe not only of the leſs conſidering Sectaries, but even of thoſe who pretend highly to Philoſophy, and aſpire after the Reputation of Wits: One whereof (ſufficiently known) hath improv'd three Syllables to that height, as to render a great part of the Scriptures ridiculous, and the noble Army of Martyrs no other than a Company of wilful and ſuperſtitious Fools, in needleſly expoſing themſelves to flames and tortures. * *Go in peace*, ſays the Prophet to *Naaman*; which ſingle caſe he advances to a general Diſpenſation for any Man to quit his Religion, as oft as it ſhall be difficult,

* 2 Kings 5. 19.

difficult, and dangerous for him to profeſs it. And this I take to be the Fountain Cauſe of all the Diviſions that are, or have been among Chriſtians; namely, that Men will not read the whole Scriptures, and give each part its juſt weight and meaſure, duly ballancing and comparing one thing with another; but each Man according to his Complexion or Education, or perhaps ſome predominant Melancholy, lays hold of that part that ſuits him beſt, and makes up a Religion for himſelf, which is little more than the Reſult of his natural temper.

Here I call to mind a paſſage of a *Non-jurant*, which I happen'd to be preſent at. The Man was reputed among his Neighbours an honeſt plain Man, but ſomewhat raſh, and of no deep conſideration, as may appear by the Story. The Diſcourſe fell out to be about Swearing, and the Perſon could not forbear to Declaim bitterly againſt it, becauſe it is ſaid, * *Swear not at all.* One of the Company urg'd that of the *Hebrews*, where the *Author* ſpeaking of God's confirming † his Promiſe made to *Abraham*, ſeems to intimate ſtrongly the neceſſity of ſwearing in ſome caſes, not vainly, nor in common diſcourſe, but in a ſolemn manner, for

* Mat. 5. 34. † Hebr. 6. 13, 16, 17.

for the avoiding of Contention, and for confirming of ſome weighty matter. And the *Author* doth not only alledge it, without any manner of Reproof, as a practice amongſt Men, who uſe to ſwear by the greater, and amongſt whom an Oath for confirmation is an End of Strife; but he adds further, that God himſelf, the more abundantly to ſhew the Immutability of his Counſel, doth condeſcend to that uſage, confirming his promiſe by an Oath. To all which the Perſon ſuddenly replied, the *Author was a Lyer in that thing*: A deciſion ſomewhat ſurpriſing, and no leſs than blaſphemy; yet had thus much of Ingenuity in it, as to yield the force of the Argument on no eaſier terms to be avoided.

Thus If Men will needs imagine an Incongruity between Preſcience and Free-will, and ſo reject the one, tho' both are equally aſſerted in Scripture, I cannot ſee how they can do it otherwiſe, than by the *Non-jurans* Argument. But ſurely Men of Reaſon and Sedate Temper, will rather argue thus, that ſince Preſcience and Free-will agree in *uno tertio*, and that no leſs than the Word of God; they muſt not only be agreed betwixt themſelves, but both true. And therefore if we cannot get them to fadge together in

our Minds, the Reason must not be any mutual jarring of theirs, but want of room in our Understandings. If that Sacred Book were impartially read, and Religiously attended to, no violence put upon it, but all its parts understood, (as they ought to be) in Congruity with the main Bulk and Substance of the Doctrine therein contained, it would put an End to this and many other Debates. The *Magistrates Sword*, and the *Peoples Conscience*, the *Prince's Prerogative*, and *Subjects Liberty*; the *Divine Attributes*, and the *Essential Properties* of *Humane Nature*; would all enjoy their full Exercise and Latitude, without invading one another. And this leads to the next thing I am to consider, Namely,

The *Harmony of Divine Attributes.* Where there are intestine Jarrs and strugling Discord, there is no Unity, nor any thing like Perfection; but those Natural Notions we have of the Being of a God, do at the same time, and with equal Evidence, dictate to us his essential Perfection; therefore to talk of an imperfect Deity, is so great a piece of Non-sense, as cannot sufficiently be expos'd; because there is nothing in the World to which it can be reduced, more absurd than it self. Down-right *Atheism* is indeed

deed a monſtrous thing, yet I think 'tis capable of a better Colour, than having once acknowledg'd an adorable Supreme Being, at the ſame time conclude him lame, or deficient. He that looks about him into the World, and yet ſays in his heart, * *There is no God*, is properly a Fool, and that cannot make a rational Inference, and from the things that are made, cannot ſo much as conclude there muſt be a † Maker. And when both his Bible and his own Eyes may inform him, that every Houſe is built by ſome Man, yet ‖ (as if the World muſt build it ſelf) ſo fooliſh is he as not to conſider, that he that built all things is God. But now, he that thinks God like unto himſelf (*a*), that is, ſubject to Failing and Imperfections, is ſtyled *Improbus*, (*b*) wicked or deteſtable, which ſeems to be the heavier charge of the two. And I have heard of ſome of the Ancients, *Plutarch* I think it was, ſpeaking to this effect; *I had rather Poſterity ſhould ſay, there never was ſuch a Man, than that* Plutarch *was an injurious and vile Perſon.*

Now this Foundation, which is deep laid both in Scripture and Natural Reaſon, namely; that God is every way perfect, is enough

* Pſal. 14. 1. † Rom. 1. 20. ‖ Heb. 3. 4. (*a*) Pſal. 50. (*b*) 16. 21.

to build my whole Deſign upon: He is perfect in Power, * *He doth what he will both in Heaven and in Earth*; perfect in Juſtice, † *Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* perfect in Knowledge, ‖ *Declaring the End from the Beginning.* His (*a*) *Will* is *perfect*, his (*b*) *Law* is *perfect*, his (*c*) *Work* is *perfect*, all his *Ways* are *Judgment.* If the Streams be ſo clear, the Fountain muſt needs be pure. But if any Man now will raiſe a Diſpute amongſt the Divine Perfections (like that of the Diſciples) *which ſhould be greateſt*; or ſhould give ſo much to one, as to leave nothing for another; he would make ſtrange work. Juſt as if ſome Man ſhould be ſaid to be a very prudent and juſt Perſon in himſelf, yet when he comes to deal with his Neighbour, his Prudence undermines his Honeſty, and ſo he would become a Knave, or on the contrary, ſhould his Honeſty out-go his Diſcretion, that would (in ſome degree) render him a Fool. And this tho' a blunt Compariſon, ſeems to be the very ca'e in Debate. We muſt however be careful to ſpeak with Reverence and Decorum, even in applying the moſt juſt Conſequences of other

* Chron. 20. 6. † Gen. 18. 25. ‖ Job 36. 4. (*a*) Rom. 12. 2. (*b*) Pſal. 18. 30. (*c*) 2 Sam. 22. 31. (*d*) Deut. 32. 4.

ther Mens Doctrine unto the divine Majesty.

The Attributes we are concern'd with in this matter are chiefly two; but by consequence great many more; God's *Wisdom*, and his *Goodness*; the former implies Knowledge, and that includes Prescience; the latter comprehends Justice, in which Free-will is strongly implyed. In reference to the first, take but away from God his Foreknowledge of future Events, and you may almost as well dethrone him; for besides that, it doth clearly infer Ignorance and Imperfection, whereby his *Wisdon* and *Knowledge* will come in Question; it carries with it a kind of Impotency, for he that knows not of an Event before it comes, may be surprised and defeated of his Expectation; and how should he have power to have prevented what he knew not of before? *Suarez* is positive in the place above-mentioned, *That had not God a Fore-knowledge of all things, he were not fit to govern the World.* And as for the latter, take away from Man his Free-agency, and you bring him under such a fatality, that he is in no sort Master of his own Actions; and then saith the Learned Dr. *Cudworth*, * *You take away the foundation of distributive Justice*: For what E-

* Intellectual World.

quity can there be in the Reward or Puniſhment of thoſe things, wherein Man has no choice, and which could not poſſibly have fallen out otherwiſe? So that here is no denying of either, without rejecting one or more of the Divine Attributes, and ſo rendring the Bleſſed God a lame and imperfect Being; as if he could not be omniſcient, but he muſt be Arbitrary; nor juſt, without being ignorant.

Beſides, how can God be ſaid *to ſearch the Heart*, * and † *try the Reins*, or to what purpoſe ſhould he do it, unleſs he knows the bent and tendency of Men's Minds, and what they will do before they act it? And how can he ſuit his Providences to his bleſſed ‖ Ends and Purpoſes, for the good of his People, if he knows not the Exigencies that ſhall befall them? On the other hand, if there be no voluntary Agents in the World, what need any Providence at all? General Laws might ſerve the turn, 'tis but putting the ſeveral Parts and Wheels of the Creation together, and ſet them a moving like a *Pendulum*, and they will drive on one another; and ſo *Epicurus* his Doctrine comes in play, that *God regards not particular things*. What can we expect but confuſion and diſorder,

* Rom. 8. 27. † Jer. 11. 20. ‖ Rom. 8. 28.

der, whilſt we invade the Divine Attributes, or labour to ſet them at odds one with another?

But now, if we lay aſide all Perverſeneſs and Prepoſſeſſion, the Harmony of the Divine Perfections will be a moſt pleaſant object of our Conſideration. God doth not impoſe a Neceſſity of ſinning upon any Man, but he knows ſome Men will be ready enough to ſin, out of choice. He doth not puniſh or reward in Men what he acteth himſelf, or what he cauſeth them to act without the Intervention of their Wills; but if ſome will be vertuous, and others vitious, when they might be otherwiſe, God is juſt in puniſhing and rewarding, tho' not ignorant in the mean time, who will deſerve well or ill at his hands. In a word, God doth know, that Man is a Free-Agent, becauſe he made him ſo, and doth daily preſerve him in that Capacity; he alſo knows, that ſome Men will abuſe their Freedom in ſpite of all Invitations and Inducements to the contrary, unleſs he interpoſe his Sovereign Power (as ſometimes I conceive he doth) to move them irreſiſtably unto good.

From what hath been ſaid, the Argument will lye thus. God is perfect in all his Attributes, and harmonious in all his Actings,

and Providences, throughout the World: But the denial of Divine Prescience doth infringe his Wisdom and Power, and the Denial of Free-will doth obstruct his Justice; therefore it must follow, that Man's Free-agency is not only consistent with God's Fore-knowledge of future Events, but both of them are most certainly true.

The third thing to be considered, is the *Non-causality of Divine Prescience.* At the time indeed when this Discourse happened, I was laught at by one of the Gentlemen, for using that as an Argument, which he would by no means admit for a truth. But I do not look upon laughter as a sufficient confutation, and oft-times those who carry things at highest, are furthest out of the way. I shall therefore lay down this Proposition, and run the hazard of Proving it, Namely, that

God's foresight of what I shall hereafter choose, hath not any causality in it, to determine my choice, nor to infringe at all my liberty of choosing. If I can make this evident, it will be very material; for the main thing that seems to byas and mislead Mens Minds in this matter, is an apprehension, that God's Fore-knowledge of any thing must needs cause the same, and that thence all other inferiour causes must be urged on by such a fatal Ne-

Neceſſity, that the Effect is put quite without the Verge of *Liberum Arbitrium.* But this I hope will appear to be a great Extravagancy from the following Conſiderations.

Let us then obſerve *firſt*, that all Foreſight or Preſcience, is nothing elſe but a ſort of Knowledge, and Knowledge doth ſuppoſe ſomething to be known antecedent thereunto. A Man cannot be ſaid to know, but he muſt know ſomething that was in being before he knew it; and even the Objects of Divine Fore-knowledge have a virtual Exiſtence in God, antecedent in order of Nature thereunto; ſo that as to himſelf it is rather *Intuition* than *Preſcience*, but with reſpect unto us, and to the not-yet actual Exiſtence of the Objects, the word Preſcience is proper enough, as was noted before. Knowledge then hath its dependance upon the things known, not they on it; and therefore ſtrictly, Knowledge, conſidered barely as ſuch, is an Effect and no Cauſe at all. As for Example, I know that the Sun warms and refreſhes; but then there was a Sun in being firſt, whoſe influence I have found to have this Effect upon me. I know that the three Angles of every Triangle are equal to two right Angles, becauſe firſt, I have ſeen a Triangle, and then I have ſeen the *Theorem* demon-

monſtrated; but my knowing it, is no cauſe why it is ſo. I deny not yet, that the knowledge of one thing, is frequently the cauſe of another thing ſubſequent, and emergent thereupon; but never of that particular thing known; for inſtance, my knowledge of a high water makes me decline the Foord, and go about by the Bridge, but it is not therefore the cauſe of the high water. I know that ſuch a Man is crafty, for which cauſe I take care, that he do not over-reach me; but my Knowledge is no cauſe of his craftineſs. * *I know the blaſphemy of them which ſay they are Jews and are not*; (ſaith he that holdeth the ſeven Stars in his right hand:) But if any Man will ſay, that this knowledge was the cauſe of that blaſphemy, he will go near to be a Blaſphemer himſelf.

Object. But here it will be objected, *That theſe Inſtances are only of things already in being, which are not like to be cauſed by a knowledge ſubſequent thereunto; but the Queſtion is about the knowledge of things to come; beſides, if Preſcience be but a ſpecies of Knowledge, and that all Knowledge ſuppoſeth ſomething to be known antecedent to it, as was intimated above, it ſeems there may be a certain* Preſcience *of a thing antecedent, or which is all*

* Rev. 2. 9.

all one, Fore-know'edge of a thing paſt: But is not this a plain Contradiction?

This Objection will be eaſily anſwered, by conſidering the Nature of Preſcience a little more particularly. And firſt, there is a kind of Fore-knowledge of certain things, that Man is capabe of, as namely, *Changes of the Moon, Eccliplſes of both the great Luminaries*, various *Phaſes, Conjunctions* and *Configurations* of *Planets, Occultations* of *Fixed Stars*, with divers other *Phænomena:* All theſe by Calculation, may be foreſeen for many years, and foretold even to a few Minutes. The King's Obſerver, (for Example) or any other Curious Aſtronomer, knows of theſe Appearances before they come, and when to watch them at the Obſervatory. But is there any Man ſo pleaſant, as to ſay, that the Aſtronomers Skill is the cauſe of an Eclipſe? or, if *Monſr. Hevelius* can tell when ſome of the fixed Stars will diſappear, that therefore he hides them cunningly, and will not let the World ſee them? Now why ſhould not humane Preſcience, in its kind and degree, have a power of determining the Events foreſeen, as well as Divine? and what's the reaſon that this foreſight has not the leaſt cauſality upon theſe Effects? I ſuppoſe it will be anſwered, becauſe

cauſe they depend upon certain regular and conſtant Motions of the Celeſtial Bodies, which have been ever ſince the World began; and the like Appearances that are now, have been heretofore; and will be again, ſo long as the World ſhall continue; ſo that this Fore-knowledge is little more than Recollection of what is paſt. For as it would have been a rare thing to have foretold an Eclipſe before ever there was any, ſo would it be an eaſie matter for a Man of ordinary Skill, to predict thoſe that ſhall happen unto the Worlds end, provided he were furniſhed with an exact Hiſtory of all thoſe that have been from the Begining.

Let us now examine whether theſe, or the like Reaſons, may not be of force in the buſineſs of Divine Preſcience; and in order thereunto, let us ſuppoſe ſome point of time, like that of the *Julian Period*, before the Creation, wherein the World was not yet in being. There was then in God, (1.) The Power and Vertue of educing this ſame World out of Non-exiſtence into Being. (2.) A Will to do it, in ſuch time and manner as ſeemed good unto himſelf. (3.) A perfect *Idea* or *Proſpect* of this great Work in all its parts and Succeſſion, and all this from Eternity: This Idea, or Eternal View of

of all Things and Actions, that have been, or ever ſhall be, is what we call Divine Preſcience; it was antecedent to the actual Exiſtence of the World, but ſubſequent in order of nature unto God's Eternal Purpoſe of creating it. Now I appeal to the Reaſon of Mankind, whether it is the Platform that builds the Houſe, or whether we ought to refer the cauſe of the Worlds production unto this *Idea*, or rather to the Concurrence of Divine Will and Power.

If it be ſtill urged, *That God's Fore-knowledge of Events muſt of neceſſity produce the ſame, ſince what he foreknows is ſure to come to paſs.* It may eaſily be anſwered, that what God foreſees, is indeed certain; but ſuch certainty doth not conſiſt in the foreſight, but in the cauſes foreſeen; and tho' the effect will ſurely come to paſs, yet not without its proper cauſes; of which cauſes, foreknowledge can be none at all, unleſs it could be both the Cauſe and Effect of the ſame thing, which is impoſſible.

Obj. *But how can God's Fore-knowledge be called an Effect, which doth ever ſuppoſe an antecedent Cauſe? For ſince you grant it to have been from Eternity, if it be an Effect, it muſt be an Eternal One, whoſe antecedent Cauſe muſt therefore be fetcht from beyond Eternity.*

Eternity. Nor have you yet ſufficiently explained how far, or whether you admit there may be ſuch a thing, as Fore-knowledge of what is already paſt, which was objected before.

To this laſt part of the Objection I have already ſaid, (if it be conſidered) what amounts to a ſufficient Anſwer; but yet I ſhall endeavour to be a little plainer.

Firſt then, that God did foreknow the things that are now paſt, as well as what are to come, is by no means to be doubted; but to ſay, that he does now foreknow what is already paſt, is Non-ſenſe, becauſe it implies the futurity of what is elapſed; as if I ſhould ſay, God fore-knows the Deluge, or the Building of *Babel*; this would be contradiction in point of time, as though the things were yet to come, which are long ſince paſt; but it's proper to ſay, God did foreknow them.

But *Secondly*, the Notion I aim at, will beſt be apprehended, by remembring always to diſtinguiſh between the *real* and the *vertual* Exiſtence of things; the former is brought forth in time, and therefore I ſay, God did foreſee from Eternity; but I cannot ſay ſo of the latter, which being it ſelf Eternal, can admit no priority in point of time. As for inſtance, 10000 years ago the World

World was not extant, and ſomething doubtleſs will be hereafter, which is not now; but there never was, nor ever will be any thing extant, but what is, or was, Virtually, exiſtant in God, and clearly viſible to his all-ſeeing Eye from all Eternity; therefore God's Omniſcient View, or *Idea* of all things, being antecedent to the Creation, but ſubſequent in order of Nature to the Vertual Exiſtence of the World, is Foreknowledge with reſpect to the one; but Contemplation or Intuition in reſpect of the other. If we look forward to the Creation, it is Preſcience; but if we look back upon Eternity, it is the reſult of Divine Will and Power, or it is God's beholding in himſelf the Platform of his Deſign, which (as I ſaid before) is an effect of the Divine Purpoſe, to build a world: which Purpoſe is the higheſt Link in the Chain of Cauſality, even as the firſt ſtep of *Solomon* towards building of the Temple was this, * *Behold, I purpoſe to build an Houſe unto the Name of the Lord my God.* It is true, that God is infinite and Eternal in all his Attributes, and ſo there can be no Precedence amongſt them in order of time, yet in order of Nature there muſt be Priority, ſince God cannot be ſaid to behold

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* 1 Kings 5. 5.

a pure *Nothing*, to ſee, know, and behold, are Relative Terms, and do ever ſuppoſe ſomething to be ſeen, known, or beheld.

Thirdly, As for the other part of the Objection againſt an Eternal Effect, it will lye as hard againſt our Bleſſed Saviour, who is the *Eternal Son of God*, the *brightneſs of his Fathers Glory*, the *Expreſs Image of his Perſon*, and the *Effect of his Love to Mankind.* Theſe alſo are relative Terms, a Son ſuppoſes a Father; an Image, or Copy, ſuppoſes an Original, yet none ſurely doubts the Eternity of him who *laid the foundations of the Earth, and whoſe Throne is for ever and ever.*

I put the Queſtion even now, what the reaſon was, that the *Aſtronomers* Skill and Fore-knowledge of the *Celeſtial Phenomena*, had not the leaſt influence to cauſe the ſame? and I gave this Anſwer, becauſe theſe *Phenomena* did depend upon certain Motions of the Heavenly Bodies, which were regular, and had been from the beginning of the World; and ſo it was but enquiring into theſe Motions, and the Fore-knowledge of Eclipſes, Conjunctions, and the like, would follow by conſequence. Let it be now demanded, why Divine Preſcience had not any cauſality or influence upon the Creation?

[a] Hebr. 1. v. 3, 8, 10.

on? and I ſhall anſwer this Queſtion juſt after the ſame manner; namely, becauſe the Creation did depend upon the Will and Purpoſe of God, which is the firſt Mover, the Fountain-Cauſe of all things, and was from Eternity. Omnipotence it ſelf, and even infinite Goodneſs, would ſeem barren and unfruitful without a Will to Act, for whatever God made in Wiſdom, and ruleth by his Power, were wrought after the * *Counſel of his own Will*; nor is there any thing in Heaven or in Earth, that can preſcribe (in point of cauſality) unto the Bleſſed Will of God: 'Tis no more then, but Gods beholding, or taking a View of his own Purpoſe, and the Fore-knowledge of the future World muſt follow by conſequence, which Fore-knowledge is nothing elſe, but the Proſpect of what was potentially exiſtent in himſelf, from everlaſting, as hath been ſaid.

From the foregoing Diſcourſe it may appear, that Divine Preſcience, as ſuch, cannot in propriety of Speech be ſaid to have created the World, nor to have had any efficacious influence thereupon; and if we conſult the Scripture, we ſhall find the ſame yet more evident: There we find that God ſaid, † *Let there be light, and there was light.*

* Eph. 1. 11. † Gen. 1. 3.

That,* *by the Word of the Lord were the Heavens made,* † *and all the hoſt of them by the breath of his Mouth.* ‖ That the *Worlds were framed by the Word of God.* (*a*) And that *He upholds all things by the Word of his Power.* Now whether we take the Word of God for his Power, or for his powerful Command, or for the manifeſtation of his Will, (as it is frequently uſed in Scripture under theſe and ſundry other acceptations) it will ſtill come to the ſame thing, and what I am pleading for; but I do not obſerve it ever taken for Preſcience, nor will the Bible (I think) afford an Inſtance of any Cauſality aſcribed thereunto; but on the contrary, many Scriptures do clearly evince Divine Preſcience, and at the ſame time aſcribe the Events foreſeen to other Cauſes, which muſt needs be very much to the matter in hand, I ſhall mention two or three.

Firſt, Our Saviour Chriſt (as was noted before) is ſaid to know all things that ſhould come upon him; and yet his being delivered unto death by the *Jews*, is attributed to their ignorance; *For had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.*

Scondly, In the 29*th*. Chap. of St. *Luke*'s Goſpel, (*a*) our Lord Chriſt foretold (and there-

* Pſal. 33. 6. † Heb. 11. 3. ‖ Heb. 1. 3. (*a*) Ver. 43, 44.

therefore certainly he foreknew it) that Enemies *would cast a Trench about Jeruſalem, that they would lay it even with the Ground, and not leave one ſtone upon another.* Should Preſcience have theſe diſmal Effects, it might be thought to be a very malignant thing; and that which belongs to God as a Divine Perfection, could not be cleared from being the Cauſe of much Evil. But let us not charge God fooliſhly, ſince we are informed of the true cauſe in the very next Words; namely, *Becauſe thou kneweſt not the time of thy viſitation.*

Thirdly, In the Prophecy of *Hoſea*, it is ſaid of *Iſrael*, *Ephraim* and *Judah*, * *that they ſhall fall in their Iniquity, and that they ſhall be as Chaff driven with the Whirlwind out of the floor, and as ſmoak out of the Chimney.* Was this Fore-knowledge the cauſe of that deſtruction? No; for it is preſently added, *O Iſrael, thou haſt deſtroyed thy ſelf.*

Again, the Prophet *Ezekiel* is commanded to ſay unto the Prince of *Tyrus*, † *That Strangers, the terrible of the Nations, ſhall draw their Sword againſt the Beauty of thy Wiſdom, and they ſhall defile thy brightneſs, and bring thee down to the pit, &c.* And ſhall this come upon him becauſe God foreſaw it?

* Chap. 5. Chap. 13. † Ezek. 28.

No; but because *thine heart was lifted up; and thou hast said, I am a God.*

Lastly, To name no more, St. *Paul* exhorting * to stedfastness in the Faith, foretells the *Coming of the Man of Sin, which would be after the working of Satan, with all Power and Signs, and Lying Wonders*; that *there would be a falling away from the truth, and men should believe Lyes, that so they might be damned.* Now should any Man to requite St. *Paul* for his Care of the Church, as to lay the blame of all these sad Consequences upon him, I know not whether would be greater, the Folly or Wickedness of such a Charge; and it would be yet worse, to lay the fault upon the Spirit by which he spake, as coming near to Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. But the Text carries the Cause along with the Effect, namely, † *Because they received not the love of the Truth, that they might be saved, for this cause God shall send them strong Delusions,* &c. When truth has offer'd it self by Miracles, and all possible demonstrations unto the minds of Men, and will not be received, it is a signal piece of Justice, to give them over to believe a Lye. But here first the true *Physitian* of a Christian Soul admonisheth it's safety

* 2 Thes. 2. 3. † Verse 2, 3.

ſafety and it's danger; it's ſafety, *not to be ſoon ſhaken*; and it's danger of being *decieved*: Now, if the Soul reject both the *Phyſitian* and his *Advice*, and having wilfully put it ſelf into the Hands of an *Ignoramus*, is deſtroy'd by him; nothing in the World can be more ridiculous, than to blame the timely Warning and Foreſight of the good *Phyſitian*.

Object. But as concerning theſe and other Prophetick Scriptures, I meet with this *Salvo*, namely, *That whatever God foretells, he doth by his power inforce the accompliſhment and fulfilling of the ſame. For* (ſay theſe Perſons) *tho' God knows all things knowable, yet ſuch Events as are contingent, or depend upon the fluctuating, and undetermin'd Wills of Men, are never knowable till they are brought to paſs; and therefore God cannot foreknow them. But now, what God will have brought to paſs, and whereof he gives Notice to the World by his Prophets, he doth bend and impel Mens Minds to do them, and by an irreſiſtable influence bring them to effect.*

This Argument indeed ſtrikes home; the only danger is, that it goes too far; and will prove what the Patrons of it ſeem highly to oppoſe. None can pretend a greater concern for the Honour of God, than thoſe that de-

claim againſt what they call *Horrendum Decretum*; yet this *Hypotheſis* of theirs will force them to admit the very ſame thing, and will make God the Author of Sin with an high hand. For if in reference to all ſuch things as are foretold by Prophecy, there muſt not be admitted any thing contingent, nor purely voluntary, as falls out in other affairs; but all ſuch Events are brought about by abſolute force; what is this but a fatal and inevitable Decree? And how can ſecond Cauſes fall under any blame, ſince they are infallibly predetermin'd by God's Almighty Power? Hence it will follow, that the *Jews* and the *Roman* Soldiers, were no more to be blamed for their Injuſtice and Cruelty to the Bleſſed Jeſus, than a Watch is for going too faſt, when the Spring is ſet too high, or made too ſtrong for the Movement. And if the fault be not in ſecond Cauſes, it muſt of neceſſity lye upon the firſt.

It will be in vain to alledge, that they had been grievous Sinners formerly, and therefore God juſtly gave them up afterwards to hardneſs of Heart. For, * *The Lamb was ſlain from the foundation of the World*, tho' not actually, yet ſo as to be the Object of Divine Preſcience, unleſs you will ſay, he was

* Rev. 13. 8.

was ſlain from the foundation of the World, and yet God knew not of it. It was then foreknown unto God, that the Lamb would he actually ſlain, before they that ſlew him had done good or evil. So that if God do enforce whatever he foreknows, then they who crucified our Saviour, were under a neceſſity of doing it, from the foundation of the World; and they who ſhall be ſeduced by Antichriſt to believe a Lye, and ſo be damned, have been about ſixteen hundred years under a fatal Decree of Damnation. And even *Adam*, whom all Men grant to have had Free-will, muſt have been under a neceſſity of falling; unleſs we ſhall ſuppoſe, that when God foreordained his dear *Son* for a * *Sacrifice*, he did not know to what End. But the Lamb ſlain doth ſuppoſe Sin to be attoned, and that implies Sinners: Now there could not be Sinners, but ſome Body muſt ſin firſt, and that being the firſt Man *Adam*, muſt (by this Argument) have ſinned, not out of choice, but unavoidable neceſſity, which is a moſt horrid and impious abſurdity.

Thus we have at hand three pregnant Inſtances, which do mightily expoſe the weakneſs of the Objection: The *Sin* of *Adam*,

* 1 Pet. 1. 20.

Adam, the *Death* of *Chriſt*, the *Deſtruction* of *Jeruſalem*. The *firſt* of theſe appears to have been certainly foreknown unto God, and yet none denies that *Adam* had power to have ſtood innocent. The *ſecond* was ſo particularly foretold by our Saviour himſelf, that the very Perſons were pointed out, who were the chief Actors in it; yet *Had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory*. The *third* likewiſe was largely and punctually prophecied; yet had * *Jeruſalem known in her day, the things which belonged to her peace*, Chriſt ſays, † *He would have gathered her Children together, as the Hen gathereth her Chickens under her wings, but ſhe would not*. So that in theſe great Events, we may eaſily diſcern a reſerv'd condition, and an evident poſſibility of having been otherwiſe, tho' they were all known unto God from the Foundation of the World. For in caſe of right Judgment and Information (poſſible enough to have been attain'd) *Adam* had not *ſinned*, *Chriſt* had not *ſuffered*, *Jeruſalem* had not been *ruin'd*. They were all indeed foreſeen in their Cauſes, and thoſe Cauſes were ſure to produce their proper Effects ſo far as they were permitted; that is,

* Mat. 23. 36. † Luke 19. 42.

is, God foreſaw, that Men left to their Liberties and their Luſts, would make a falſe Eſtimate of things, and would be ſure to act accordingly; but yet ſuch foreſight had no Cauſality upon ſuch Actions, as hath been ſaid; nor could there be any inforcement from God upon ſuch Events, whereby the Liberty of free Agents was in the leaſt diminiſhed, if the Scriptures be admitted for truth.

But here I would not be miſunderſtood, as if I thought God to be an unactive beholder of all thoſe Tranſactions which are foretold by Prophecy: Surely he is too much a Cauſe of all things, to be a *Nude Spectator* of any one Action; and certain Events I grant to have been as well predetermin'd as prophecy'd, of which I ſhall give Inſtance preſently. When God purpoſeth to have any thing brought about, he can eaſily ſet Agents at work, and remove Impediments; he can turn Mens Hearts like Rivers of Water, yet never ſo, as to put any preternatural force upon the Will to do evil.

For the courſe of Divine Providence, (tho' inviſible to us) I conceive to be ſo laid, and things dependent (by God's diſpoſal) in ſuch a Series and Concatenation, that various Cauſes and Contingents ſhall con-

cur to operate upon Mens Faculties, in ſuch ſort, as to make them willing to act their Parts, (unknown oft-times unto themſelves) in order to effect the Almighty's Purpoſe. Upon which Account I am apt to believe, that even in reference to thoſe Events that are under a peremptory Decree, moſt of the Actors that bring them about, are as much free Agents, as is the Husband-man in his choice of a fit ſeaſon to plow his ground. But however, the things I mainly inſiſt upon are theſe, that ſince Men derive that ſtrength from God, by which they Blaſpheme his Name, and violate his Laws, God muſt be the primary Cauſe of thoſe Actions, but not of the Will wherewith they are done. That he doth not Enforce the Volitions unto Evil, and yet he fore-knows them: And that in divers Inſtances it doth appear, that thoſe Events and Actions have been foreknown unto God, of which the immediate Inſtruments have been free and voluntary Agents, as hath already been made evident.

There is yet another part of the *Objection* to be conſidered, namely, *That future contingents are not knowable.* I confeſs, they are inſcrutable to us, to whom they are contingent, but to God there can be no ſuch thing;

thing; for he that makes any thing contingent unto God, leaves him obnoxious to Surprize and Diſappointment, and conſequently under great Difficulty of Governing the World. For the clearing of this point, let us lay down for a ground-work (what I hope is not denied by any that I am concerned with, namely,) that God Almighty knows moſt perfectly all things preſent; and let us ſee whether this will not both infer the knowledge of things to come, and take away all contingency with reſpect unto God. And by the way, let us obſerve the knowledge of Mankind, which tho' very dim and imperfect, even in things now exiſtent, and before our Eyes, yet extends in ſome degree to things both paſt and future. The Hiſtorian is acquainted with many revolutions of former Ages, and from a parity of Reaſon may foreſee ſome that are to come. The Phyſitian, that underſtands in any competent Meaſure the Nature of a Medicine, knows from whence it derives it's Original, what are it's conſtituent Principles, and how it will operate. The Mechaniſt that underſtands an Engine, knows how it was made, the parts of which it is compoſed, and what Feats it will perform. The Philoſpher, that enquires into

the Reaſons of Things, and the Agency of Bodies, with the various Affections of Matter and Motion, can tell before hand the ſucceſs of divers Experiments and Undertakings, which are in the dark to other People. And the Aſtronomer can tell the future Appearances of Heaven, as was noted before. Now if all this, and much more, reſult from Man's imperfect knowledge of a few things, we muſt ſure conclude ſomething further from God's moſt perfect knowledge of all things, eſpecially if we add hereunto, the conſideration of his Dominion and Soveraignty over all Creatures.

The World is a great *Machine* or Engine, which God made at firſt, and ſtill upholds its Being and Motion by the Word of his Power: Not ſo much as an Atome can ſtir but by Vertue derived from him. Shall we then think that the great Operator knows not the parts of * his own Work, or can be ignorant of its Motions, or of the Influence that one part hath upon another? It is poſſible a Curious Artiſt may make a piece of Watch work to repreſent all the viſible Motions of the Heavens, and to meaſure out time to an incredible degree of Exactneſs: The Maker of ſuch a piece muſt needs know

* Acts 15. 18.

know it's Numbers, how long it will go, how one Motion depends upon another, and one Wheel drives on another; nor can he be ignorant, that if he ſuffer the ſprings to run down, and Wind them up no more, the Motions will ceaſe, and his Contrivance will become altogether uſeleſs: Or if by any other means, he ſtop ſome of the Motions for a time, they cannot ſtir till he gives them liberty, tho' the reſt are going in the mean while. Thus the Divine Architect, that framed the World, knows all it's Parts and Influences, all it's hidden Springs of Motion, all the Cauſes of every Effect, with their Connexion and Dependence, and the Agency of every particle of matter throughout the Univerſe. He knows for what duration he deſign'd it's Motion and Exiſtence, and the time when * *Heaven and Earth ſhall paſs away.* Nor can he be ignorant, that if he withdraw the Springs of Life, his ſupporting providence from any Creature, or from the whole World, it muſt ſink into a ſtate of Inactivity or Annihilation. Now as it would be an idle Fancy to think, that in ſuch a Watch, there ſhould ſtart up ſome new Motion, not deſign'd, and unexpected by the Maker: So it

* Mat. 24. 36.

is far more extravagant to talk of any thing contingent in reſpect of God, in as much as his Work is perfect, and he can command a punctual obſervance of thoſe Laws and Rules which he himſelf hath given to the Creation, whilſt * *Fire and Hail, Snow and Vapour, Stormy Wind fulfil his Word.*

The Sum is this: God Almighty knows moſt perfectly all things preſent; that is, the hidden ſprings of Action, and all the latent cauſes now operating; the Nature and Vertues of all things in being, with the utmoſt extent of their powers and influence, are all manifeſt in his ſight; but ſince natural things do not work in an inſtant, their force and efficacy muſt extend to future time, if I may not ſay, till time ſhall be no more; for one part of Matter will ſtill operate upon another, whilſt Sun and Moon endures. Now ſince God cannot know perfectly the force of any Agent, but (at the ſame time) he muſt know alſo the Effect it will have upon it's Patient, and how far again that Patient will become active upon other things; it will follow, that if God did not know things to come, he muſt of neceſſity be ignorant of a thouſand things preſent; for as the knowledge of Cauſes implies

* Pſalm 148. 8.

plies the knowledge of Effects, so doth the not knowing of Effects unavoidably infer the ignorance of Causes. And as he that draws one Link of an extended Chain, draws the whole, and the Motion of one of the Globuli, moves those that are contiguous, and those again others indefinitely: So it is impossible to know any one thing perfectly without the knowledge of more; and God's most perfect knowledge of all things present, must imply the knowledge of all things future.

It may be said, *That all this is true with respect unto inanimate Creatures, but Man acts from an internal Principle, and being left to the Liberty of his Will, may either act or suspend his Action; and besides, there are so many things may happen to influence his Will, that 'tis very uncertain whether of the two he will choose, until he have effectually chosen.*

Uncertain doubtless it is to other Men, and oft-times to a Man's self, what he will do in some cases; but unto God it cannot be so, for these two Reasons especially:

First, The *Heart* indeed is so *deceitful*, that for a Man to *find out the Subtilties of his own*,* is no easie disquisition; and it must be yet

* Jer. 17. 9, 10.

yet harder to know another Man's. But * *God ſees not as Man ſees*; he not only looks upon the heart, but he looks into it; † *He ſearches and tries it*; *He knows the moſt intimate Secrets of the Soul, and is a diſcerner of the thoughts and intents*; *all Creatures are manifeſt in his ſight*; *all naked and open before his Eyes.* It is impoſſible then they ſhould deceive him, or act beyond or contrary to his Expectation. For ſince words and actions flow (as ſtreams from a Fountain) out of the abundance of the Heart, it would be ſtrange that God ſhould know ſo exactly what the Fountain contains, and yet be ignorant what Streams muſt iſſue thence.

Secondly, Since the Principles from whence all humane Actions do proceed, may be reduced to two, namely, thoſe of *Nature* and *Grace*, and God muſt know the Efficacy of them both, in as much as the one proceeds from the work of his Hands, and the other from the operation of his Spirit; it muſt follow that God cannot be ignorant how far Truth or Errour, Vertue or Vice, Equity or Injuſtice, Reaſon or Fallacy, Religion or Intereſt will prevail upon any Man, either in his Natural Capacity, or under

* 1 Sam. 16. 7. † Heb. 4. 12, 13.

der ſuch a Meaſure of Grace as he beſtows upon him for that purpoſe. For as he knows the force of natural Agents, and the diſpoſition of every Patient to receive, or to repel their Agency; ſo can he not be ignorant of the Efficacy of that Vertue, which proceeds more immediately from himſelf. All which amounts to thus much in ſhort, that God Almighty is the Fountain Cauſe and Soveraign Ruler of all things, both in the Kingdom of Nature and that of Grace; and therefore muſt know the whole Series of Cauſality from the beginning to the End. And ſince that which is an effect of one thing, becomes the Cauſe of another; he muſt equally know the things to come as thoſe preſent; unleſs there be ſome Effects, which proceed not from any Cauſe at all.

Let us now conſider the Nature of a Contingent, and what it is that ſhould make Men think it cannot be foreknown. A Contingent (beſides the ſtricter Notion as it ſignifies the effect of a voluntary cauſe) may be, as I apprehend, more ſtrictly taken, for the encountring, or meeting together of ſundry Effects, whoſe Cauſes do not appear to have had any Connexion. As when a Spring-tide, a Land-flood, and a Storm from the Sea, happening at once, do make an In-

Inundation. Or when a Traveller in his Journey meets with a ſhower. Or two Friends ſetting out from ſundry Ports, meet in a far Country, without deſigning it, or knowing one of another. Now a high wind and a Spring Tide, a Journey and a Shower, have each of them Cauſes ſufficient to produce them, but they are contingent each to other, as alſo in reſpect of us, who not knowing that ſuch cauſes were operating, could not foreſee the effects. But the caſe is not ſo with God, it is not yet come to that paſs, that becauſe Men cannot foreſee contingent Events, that therefore we muſt conclude, that God cannot do it neither. For as Wind and Weather are in his Hands, and obey his Will, ſo Voluntary good Actions flow originally from the Holy Spirit, and evil Actions are permitted, as the Devils were to enter into the Swine: Nor can wicked Agents go one hair's breadth beyond their appointed limits. And even permiſſion it ſelf doth imply Fore-knowledge; for how can any one be ſaid to have permitted, what he knew not of before it was done? I hope, that to evade this Argument there's none will ſay, that God gives to wicked men a general Licence to do what they pleaſe, whilſt he in the mean time

time knows not in particular, what wickedneſs they will commit, until they have acted it. For beſides, that this Character is exactly ſuited unto Satan in his Kingdom of Darkneſs, it deſtroys Divine Providence root and branch; for how can God limit, or over-rule to his own good Ends and Purpoſes, thoſe Events whereof he hath no particular foreſight? or how can he be ſaid in ſuch a caſe to govern the World at all.

But as concerning the Nature of a Voluntary Action, I have ſpoken before; I ſhall only add in this place, that ſince God knows moſt perfectly the heart of Man, and what cauſes are intereſted in forming of his Judgment; how far the Will follows the Dictate of the Underſtanding, and of right Reaſon, or whether it is captivated by Senſual Appetite, and by the luſts that war in his Members: Since God (I ſay) doth infallibly know the Springs of all Actions, whether from Senſe, from Reaſon, or from Grace, and to what degrees any kind of External or Internal force can bend thoſe Springs; he muſt of neceſſity know what Man (purely left to his own Faculties) will do upon any occaſion.

I have inſiſted longer upon this *Objection*, as alſo upon the *Non-cauſality of Divine Pre-*

Preſcience, than ſome perhaps will think to have been neceſſary; but becauſe the ſence of the *Objection* is ſaid to come from Perſons of very great Learning and Reaſon, and I did my ſelf hear it ſtrongly urged, *that Preſcience muſt needs cauſe the things Foreſeen*; I thought it not amiſs to enlarge a little upon both the Points, in order to clear them up to common Underſtandings; but whether I have done it to Satisfaction, I muſt leave to the Readers Judgment. The ſum of what I have ſaid in reference to this laſt mentioned (which I diſcourſed of before) is this, that to affirm Divine Preſcience to have a Cauſality, in ſuch ſort, that the Events foreſeen could not poſſibly have fallen out otherwiſe, is Abſurd, and it is falſe. It is Abſurd becauſe it puts the Cart before the Horſe, and makes that to be a cauſe which is purely an effect; and it is Falſe, becauſe it is contrary to the word of Truth, contained in the Scriptures. I ſhall now conclude this part of my Eſſay, with the words of the Schoolman; * *Neque hinc etiam fit, ut per hanc Præſcientiam, Deus imponat neceſſitatem aliquam rebus ſic cognitis, quia hæc Scientia, ut ſic, non eſt earum cauſa. It doth not follow from hence, that God*

* Suarez.

God by his Fore-knowledge impoſeth any neceſſity upon the things ſo known, becauſe this knowledge, as ſuch, is not the Cauſe of them.

But before I come to the laſt part of my Deſign, I muſt make a ſhort Digreſſion, to prevent an *Objection* that may ariſe from what I ſaid not long ago, namely, *That the Divine Will was the fountain Cauſe of all things, as being the firſt Mover; for no doubt God is the firſt cauſe of all Motion, tho' he never determines any, exerted by a free Agent to a wrong Object; and all things being wrought* (as the Apoſtle ſays) *after the Counſel of his Will.* From hence it may be urged, *That tho' Divine Preſcience have no cauſality, yet ſince we grant that the Divine Will is the firſt cauſe of all things; nor can we deny, that whatever God wills, he certainly foreſees; doth it not follow from hence, that all things muſt come to paſs according to the fixed Purpoſe and Preordination of God, in ſuch ſort, that the Will of Man muſt needs be over-rul'd and predetermin'd, and conſequently the free-agency of rational Creatures wholly evacuated?*

I anſwer, this will by no means follow, as may appear from the conſideration of the following particulars.

1. Though God foreſees whatever he will

will have brought to effect, yet we cannot ſay on the contrary, that he wills every thing he foreſees. God, 'tis true, wills even the ſinful Actions, which he foreſees, but with a will permiſſive of them, not effective; perfectly knowing (as a Wiſe Man would ſhrewdly gueſs) what Perſons, ſo and ſo inclined, will do in ſuch and ſuch Circumſtances, being only Inabled, not Impelled, to act, and being left to follow their own Inclinations. And ſo he may certainly foreſee many things, which he never wills by a poſitive and effectively determinative will. He equally foreſees all things that come to paſs, otherwiſe he would be deficient in point of Knowledge; but we muſt not ſay, he wills them Equally. For that would be to approve of evil, and ſo he would be deficient in point of Goodneſs. For inſtance, he predetermin'd *Iſrael*'s Deliverance from *Egyptian* Bondage, and he likewiſe foretold it: So that herein his Purpoſe and Foreſight run Parallel. But then he foretold *Pharaoh*'s Obſtinacy in detaining the People, at the ſame time when he will'd him to let them go; and herein his Foreſight and expreſs Will are quite contrary. He wills, that *Men ſhould fear the Lord, and ſerve him in ſincerity and in truth*; and

not

not only ſo, but that they ſhould do it out of * *free choice*, ariſing from a true Judgment of things; yet he foreknows that ſome will be *Diſobedient*, and *Iniquity ſhall abound* †. He wills, that his *choſen People be with him, and ſee his Glory* ‖, and he knows it ſhall be ſo; he knows that others will *dye in their Sins*, but he hath ſworn *he wills it not* (a). Whatever God hath proclaim'd, is an undoubted Object of Divine Preſcience; but every Object of Divine Preſcience is not therefore preordain'd, nor agreeable to his Will. Good things are equally the Objects of Divine Pleaſure and Foreſight; but we cannot ſay the like of Evil. We may ſay indeed, that God foreſees an Evil Action, but we cannot ſay he would have it done, nor that he hath power to do it; for both theſe would imply a contradiction, ſince 'tis purely inconſiſtent with the Divine Nature to have either Will or Power to do evil.

A *ſecond* Conſideration is this, That tho' the Divine Will be truly and unchangeably one and the ſame, yet is it diſtinguiſhable according to a threefold difference of things about which it is converſant. As *firſt*, when God

* Joſh. 24. 14, 15. † Mat. 24. 12. ‖ Jo. 17. 24.
(a) Mat. 19. 28.

God designs to bring about some special act of his Providence in the World, as that Promise made to *Abraham*, * *Unto thy Seed will I give this Land*; in this respect his Will is Positive and Irresistable, nor can all the Powers of Earth and Hell, put one Minutes stop unto his Purpose or Decree.

But *Secondly*, when God commands any thing to be done by his People, as their Duty, and for their Good, he deals not with them as inanimate Creatures, but as rational Ones; he proposes unto them a Rule or Law, with the Benefit of observing it; as for Example, *Honour thy Father and thy Mother, that thy days may be long in the Land, &c.* But he doth not inforce the observation of this Law, upon all those to whom it is given; for so there would be no Transgression. He propounds it to their choice, expecting a Voluntary Obedience upon promise of a Reward, which reward cannot be commensurate to an Obedience upon Force, which properly is no Obedience at all. In this sense therefore his Will is Imperative, but not Irresistable; for the *stiff-necked are said to resist the Holy Ghost.* †

And *Thirdly*, when God forbids any thing

* Gen. 12. 7. † Acts 7. 51.

thing to be done by us, that would dishonour him, and destroy our selves, and yet we do it; or when he commands us any thing, wherein we disobey him, his Will is therein only permissive. Thus Sin, tho' directly opposite to the Command, is permitted. And so God is said to have *Suffered the peoples manners in the Wilderness about forty years*, * as also *in times past, he suffered all Nations to walk in their own ways* †. Not that their Ways were acceptable to him, or agreeable to his Will, (in any other sence than that of permission) much less efficaciously influenced by him; only they were suffered for a time to run their Course. For, having set before them Life and Death, partly in his Written Law, and partly in their own consciences, and having employ'd all suitable Means, Motives, and Reasonable Inducements for their choosing of the one, and refusing of the other; according to his primary Intention of good unto all Men: If nothing less than Invincible Grace will serve the turn, God is not obliged to save all those as it were by Miracle, that will not be otherwise saved; and therefore permitting obstinate Persons to reap the fruits of their own Works, his secondary

* Acts 13. 16. † Acts 14. 16.

ry intention takes place, namely, the manifeſtation of his Power, Righteouſneſs, and juſt Severity upon impenitent Sinners, whereby alſo the preciouſneſs of Grace and Mercy is the more conſpicuous to thoſe that receive it.

Now, tho' I like not by any means, that diſtinction of the Divine Will into Secret and Revealed, eſpecially when theſe two are made to contradict each other; as if it were God's Secret Will that Men ſhould ſin and be damned, when his revealed Will bids them repent and be ſaved; this is to ſtem the Current of Scripture, and in effect to make void both the Law and Goſpel. I ſay, tho' I approve not this, nor ſhall I borrow any of the School Diſtinctions; yet I think the Scripture will allow us to ſay, that the Divine Will is either Poſitive, Preceptive, or Permiſſive. By Poſitive I mean Irreſiſtable, in reference to what God does himſelf, or what he poſitively determines to be done; Preceptive is with reſpect unto Laws, and Mens voluntary obedience thereunto; Permiſſive in reſpect of Sin. And yet this is ſtill the ſame moſt bleſſed and unchangeable Will, as it is the ſame Sun-beams by which ſome ſort of Bodies are hardned, others melted, and a third calcined.

I come now to the laſt part of my Undertaking, which is to anſwer ſome of thoſe *Objections*, that are wont to puzzle divers People about this matter; but I have anſwered ſo many already, that have riſen by the way, and have enlarged beyond my expectation in what is paſt, that I would think, it ſhould ſpare ſome pains in the remainder. For the ſtrength of what now remains, may be ſumm'd up in a very few *Objections*, and anſwered (I hope) in not many words.

It is matter of eaſy Obſervation, that the Objectors do ſtill ſuppoſe the thing in Queſtion, and what ought to be proved before the Objections can have any force at all; as namely, that God's foreknowledge of the End makes void the uſe of Means; whereas it is ſo far from doing that, that the uſe of Means and ſecond Cauſes, is therein ſuppoſed and imply'd, as the Foundation of ſuch Foreknowledge. For if it were poſſible, that the force and efficacy of Cauſes could be uncertain unto God, the Foreſight of Effects would be ſo too. Thus, for example, if God foreſee that ſuch a Child ſhall live to be a Man of Eminent Learning, doth this Fore-ſight give him leave to be idle, and become a Truant every day? Now the

Objectors, according to their manner of arguing, muſt anſwer in the affirmative, and leave the Child to be made a Scholar by Miracle. But I anſwer, No; for ſuch a Foreſight muſt have ſome Foundation; it doth therefore ſuppoſe, that God for his part, by his daily providence, will continue unto him a competent meaſure of health, ſtrength and capacity, and afford him fit means and opportunities of becoming Learned; and that the Boy for his part, will ſtudiouſly imploy and improve the ſame for the beſt advantage to that End. Let us now ſee the full ſtrength of what is wont to be objected in this matter.

Obj. *If God's Fore-knowledge doth aſcertain the End, to what purpoſe is the uſe of means? An Event can be no more than certain; and if God foreſees that I ſhall certainly dye within a year, all the Medicines in the World will not make me live a day longer. But if he foreſees, I ſhall live twenty years, I ſhall not only need no Phyſick, but I may for diverſion, leap once a day into a River, or into the Ocean, without any fear of drowning. I can neither fall ſhort of, nor go beyond that fatal Period which is fixed in Divine Preſcience.*

This *Objection* ſeems to make ſome little noiſe, and yet at moſt is but a plauſible kind

kind of Fallacy, imploy'd only by vulgar and unthinking heads, but unworthy a Man of good conſideration. It is indeed anſwered in what hath been already ſaid; but I ſhall add ſomething more in theſe few particulars. As *firſt*,

1. This ſort of Reaſoning reſembles ſo much that of the Devil to our Saviour, that it may very well ſeem to challenge the ſame Author. If God forſees thou ſhalt live many years, thou may'ſt leap into the Sea, or throw thy ſelf down from a Precipice, (ſays the Objection) for thou muſt certainly live out thy appointed time. * *If thou be the Son of God, caſt thy ſelf down from this Pinnacle of the Temple,* (ſays the Devil) *for he ſhall give his Angels charge concerning thee* †. Now, as the ground of that Security againſt Dangers, and ſundry Evils mentioned in the 91*ſt. Pſalm*, at *ver.* 8. is omitted in the Devil's Quotation: So the ground of God's Foreſight and cauſe of the Event foreſeen, is omitted in the *Objection*, namely, a prudent care to preſerve life. And as the Son of God was never like to fall down and worſhip the Devil, ſo any ſober Man that lives to a full Age, is not like to attempt deſperate ways to deſtroy him-

* Mat. 4. 6. † Pſalm 91. 8.

himſelf. The Anſwer too, given by our Saviour, is proper in this Caſe; * *Thou ſhalt not tempt the Lord thy God:* For if he foreſees the End, he foreſees alſo the means conducing thereunto, which means God having graciouſly put into thine own hands, why ſhouldſt thou tempt him to ſave thy life by Miracle, when thou may'ſt preſerve it by thy own Diſcretion? Thus we ſee, the Devils Argument, and that of the Objection, run exactly Parallel.

Secondly, The Fallacy of this reaſoning conſiſts partly in joining a Truth and a Falſity together, and make the one to infer the other, tho' there be no Connexion between them; and partly in leaving out the conſideration of that which muſt be ſuppos'd, to make the ſence compleat, whether the inference be true or falſe: For inſtance, let this be the Argument in ſhort:

God foreſees the End, therefore it will ſo come to paſs.

I ſay here, the Propoſition is true, but the inference (without ſomething elſe ſuppoſed) is falſe; for if the illative Particle *therefore*, refer only to the word *foreſees*, there is no good conſequence, ſince Foreſight hath not any Cauſality, as hath (I hope) been proved.

* Mat. 4. 7.

proved. That Divine Preſcience doth aſcertain the End, is true upon this Account, *that it beholds the Cauſes wherein the certainty doth conſiſt, but that it doth ſo meerly of it ſelf, without ſuppoſition of Cauſes, and proper means to effect that end, is falſe. God, by his Foreſight, lays no neceſſity upon the Event; but he foreſees it in it's cauſes, of which humane Endeavours ordinarily are no ſmall part. Therefore the ſence of the Argument muſt, in this manner, be compleated, before it can be made to conclude any thing.

God foreſees the cauſes productive of ſuch Effects, therefore ſuch Effects will follow; not from the foreſight, but from the cauſes foreſeen.

Thirdly, Let us ſuppoſe, that God foreſees ſome ſtrong Man, vigorous and healthful, ſhall dye within a year, who according to the Courſe of Nature might live twenty. If this be true, it muſt be true alſo, that intemperance, neglect of means, or the like, muſt bring him to it: Some cauſe there muſt be; but naked Foreſight is no cauſe at all. Again, ſuppoſe God foreſees, that ſuch a per-

* Neceſſitas conſequentiæ in ordine probandi, non eſt neceſſitas rei ipſius in ordine cauſandi. *Baxt. Meth. part* 1. *pag.* 45.

perſon will live twenty years. If that be true, then, that he ſhould attempt every day to deſtroy himſelf, muſt be falſe; for if God foreſees the one, he foreſees not the other, becauſe they are inconſiſtent. He doth not foreſee contradictions to be true, or things to be that will never be; as once a wiſe Critick would needs maintain, that when *Jonah* was ſent to preach unto *Nineveh*, God then foreſaw, that City would be deſtroy'd in forty days, tho' it ſtood many years after. But God doth not foreſee that Cauſes will produce ſuch Effects as are improper and impoſſible; not that Repentance will produce Deſtruction, nor that Poiſon, Drowning, or Debauchery, will produce length of days, and vertuous prudence an untimely End. In a word, Divine Preſcience beholds not things in parcels, but altogether in one View: Sees the Iſſues and Periods of all things, not without, but in conjunction with the proper cauſes conducible thereunto.

Fourthly, It may not be amiſs to remember, that as there are ſome true Propoſitions, which by leaving out a word or two may be made falſe: So there are others (and thoſe of Divine Authority) which without ſomething underſtood, cannot be made out to be true. Of the firſt ſort is this

this, * *My Doctrine is not mine*; and again, *He that believeth on me, believeth not on me.* But this is the Devil's way of quoting Scripture, leaving out the Context that ſhould explain it, and in this manner too frequently do ſome Perſons deal with thoſe Writings, they have a mind to cavil at. Of the other ſort is this, † *Yet forty days and* Nineveh *ſhall be overthrown*; And ‖ *Know ye not that the unrighteous ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God?* Now the Divine Purpoſe for the Deſtruction of that City, and for excluding (*a*) Fornicators, Idolaters, Thieves, Drunkards, Extortioners, and the like, out of the Kingdom of Heaven, is denonnced abſolutely without any annexed Condition; and yet all acknowledge, that ſuch Threatnings are Conditionally to be underſtood, and to be executed only in caſe of Impenitency: And thus it is in our preſent caſe. That God Foreſees the End, is true; but it is not the whole Truth, nor to be underſtood excluſive of the Means. It is undoubtedly true, that Chriſt foreſaw the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*; yet we muſt not thence infer, that he foreſaw it without any reſpect to Sin; for thus he complains, *How often would I have gathered your*

* Jo. 7. 16. Jo. 12. 44. † Jon. 3. 4. ‖ 1 Cor. 6. 9. (*a*) *v.* 10.

Children together, &c. and ye would not! How could it be matter of Complaint that they would not, if the Peoples choice be not imply'd? Either God Foreſees, that Men will abuſe their Liberty, or he doth not; if not, then neither is he Omniſcient, nor are the Scriptures true; if he doth, then ſuch Foreſight is ſo far from taking away Mens Liberty, that it confirms it; for Men cannot abuſe their Liberty unleſs they have it; nor can they uſe it, if the Objection have any force, which ſuppoſeth Mens endeavours, and the uſe of Means to be in vain. Thus then I Summ up what hath been ſaid in Anſwer to the *Objection.*

* *God that made the World made all things therein, ſeeing he is Lord of Heaven and Earth, and giveth unto all Life, and Breath, and all things; and hath made of one Blood all Nations of Men to dwell upon the Earth, and Determined the Times before appointed, and the Bounds of their Habitation.* We ought not to think, that the Godhead is like unto Stones, or ſtupid Earth, that he ſhould be ignorant either of his own Off-ſpring, or of the Work of his Hands, or the Bounty of his Goodneſs. And having gratiouſly endued Mankind with the Light of Knowledge,

* Acts 17. 24, 25, 26.

ledge, and with a Faculty of chooſing things for his good, and avoiding things hurtful; he doth not extinguiſh that Sight, nor take away ſuch power of Election, unleſs it be, as a Puniſhment, for ſome grievous and long-continued Provocation. But foraſmuch as he beholds at once in his Omniſciency, the Nature, Vertue, and Activity of all Creatures, with the Cauſes, Events and Iſſues of all Things and Actions, from Everlaſting to Everlaſting; and ſince he knows moſt perfectly the Heart of Man, the Bent of his Affections, his meaſure of Grace, and prevailing Motives; he muſt of neceſſity Foreknow the various Reſults of Man's choice and Liberty of Will, without the leaſt obſtruction to the free Courſe and Exerciſe thereof. He Foreſees the End, together with the Means, and the Effect depending on its proper Cauſe. He foreſees, that ſome Men ſhall not live out * *half their days*, but they are ſuch as are bloody and deceitful. He foreſees, that † *The Years of the Wicked ſhall be ſhortned*; but then he ſhall fall by his own wickedneſs. And to conclude, he foreſees, that ‖ *A righteous Man ſhall prolong his days*; not by daily attempts to deſtroy himſelf, but (as the Wiſe Man

* Pſal. 55. 23. † Prov. 10. 27. ‖ Prov. 11. 5.

ſaith) *by the fear of the Lord, and in the way of Righteouſneſs.*

Obj. One *Objection* more, and I have done. *It hath been often ſaid in this Diſcourſe, that the Event Foreſeen of God, is certain, and will come to paſs; and again, it hath been aſſerted, that ſome Events, which have been Foreſeen, might poſſibly not have come to paſs; how can theſe two Notions agree together?*

I anſwer, *firſt*, that any thing can be certain and uncertain at the ſame time, and in the ſame reſpects, is granted to be a contradiction; but a thing barely Poſſible, which may either be, or not be; implies no contradiction at all. For as there are many things Poſſible to be, which ſhall never came to paſs Actually; ſo other things ſhall Actually come to paſs, which yet Poſſibly might not be. Thus it is Poſſible, I may go to *Rome*, but 'tis a thouſand to one, I ſhall never come there; and if it Actually ſo fall out, yet that does not take away the Poſſibility of going thither; for Learned Men ſay, * *Multa futura eſſe quæ non erunt, & multa poſſe fieri quæ non fient.* On the other hand, ſomething will Actually (that is certainly) be done this day, which poſſibly might be deferr'd till to morrow: *Illud enim*

* White *de Mundo.*

enim poſſibile eſt, quo poſito nullum ſequitur inconveniens. But all this perhaps will better appear from the conſideration of theſe Particulars.

1. An Event may be certain with reſpect unto God, which is not ſo to us; for nothing can be uncertain to him that is Omniſcient; but to us, that know but in part, almoſt every thing Future is obſcur'd with ſome kind of uncertainty.

2. An Event may be certain in it ſelf, on Suppoſition of certain Cauſes; and yet ſuppoſing other Cauſes, it would fall out quite otherwiſe. So that

3. The certainty of a future Event is abſolute in reſpect of God, Hypothetical in reſpect of it ſelf, but unknown or uncertain in reſpect of us. That is to ſay, it can never ſo fall out, but that he who knows the whole train of Cauſes leading to it, muſt of neceſſity Foreknow it. But it is the Cauſes (not the Foreknowledge) which make it to be what it is; which being ſuppoſed, the Effect certainly follows. Which Certainty extends not to us, who are ignorant of the Cauſes. Let us ſee now, how this will appear by inſtances.

Suppoſe, the *French* King, before he dye, turns *Proteſtant*; whether it ſo fall out or

not, God knows; for (as *Solomon* ſaith) * *The Kings heart is in the hand of the Lord.* If Conviction or Intereſt oblige him to become a *Proteſtant*, the Effect will certainly follow; but this is Hypothetical; that is, upon Suppoſition of prevailing Cauſes and Motives it muſt follow. But to us there can be nothing of Certainty, whilſt we are ignorant of that Princes Intentions, neither know how it may pleaſe God to work upon him hereafter.

The Captivity of the *Jews* was certainly Foreknown unto God, and, together with a great Peſtilence foretold by the Prophet *Jeremiah*, in a very remarkable and particular manner: And afterwards, ſaith the Lord, *I will deliver* Zedekiah *King of* Judah, *and his Servants, and the People, and ſuch as are left in this City, from the Peſtilence, from the Sword, and from the Famine, into the hand of* Nebuchadnezzar *King of* Babylon, *and into the hand of their Enemies, &c.* And he adds further, *That their City ſhall be given into the hand of the King of* Babylon, *and he ſhall burn it with Fire.* Yet the ſame Prophet is ſent to call them to Repentance, to prevent even this very Captivity, and tells them, ‖ *If ye throughly amend your*

* Prov. 21. 1. † Jer. 21. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. ‖ Jer. 7. 5, 6, 7

your Ways and your Doings; if ye throughly execute Judgment between a Man and his Neighbour; if ye oppreſs not the Stranger, the Fatherleſs and the Widdow, and ſhed not innocent Blood in this place, neither walk after other Gods to your hurt; then will I cauſe you to dwell in this place, in the Land that I gave to your Fathers, for ever and ever. We ſee here a reſerved Condition, and fair poſſibility of preventing that Eminent Captivity, ſo much noted in Scripture, and ſo much Propheſied. God grant that we, by the ſame Method, may earneſtly endeavour to prevent another Captivity, which has (they ſay) been Propheſied too, and which ſeverely threatens *England* at this day.

I conclude with *Adam*'s Tranſgreſſion, before-mentioned; which was moſt certainly Foreknown unto God, foraſmuch as * *Redemption by the Precious Blood of Chriſt was Foreordained before the foundation of the World*; and 'tis no leſs certain, that *Adam* had Free Will, and Power to have perſiſted Innocent, which ſurely amounts at leaſt to a poſſibility of not tranſgreſſing the Divine Command. And this conſideration alone is enough to anſwer the Objection, and to ſilence any Argument that can be oppoſed in this matter.

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* 1 Pet. 1. 10.

I have now done; the Uſes I propound to my ſelf from this Diſcourſe are Specially theſe four: 1. To read the Scriptures Impartially, and to value them Equally, upon the Account of that Sacred Authority ſtampt upon the whole, and the Spirit that breaths in every part; not to build an Hypotheſis upon ſome few ſingle Expreſſions, further than it may appear, to be conſentaneous to the integral Body of Truth contained therein. 2. In all myſterious Points, wherein there appears a difficulty, either to affirm or deny, ſtill to adhere to that ſide which hath the ſurer Evidence; and wherein the Word of God is clear and unqueſtionable, to eſteem that the ſtrongeſt Evidence of all; and unto which all Arguments from humane reaſon, and even Mathematical Demonſtration, muſt yield ſubmiſſion. 3. But in ſuch matters, wherein there appears equal Danger in both extreams, and wherein many Perſon have err'd on either hand; to take the *MIDDLE WAY*, and walk in it, with ſuch Caution and Moderation, as to be Friends with them that tread not the very ſame ſteps, and always ready to admit any further diſcovery of Truth. 4. To repreſent the Ever-bleſſed God, in the beſt manner that may be thought, and moſt worthy

of

of ſo glorious a Being, cloathed with all Perfection, Beauty and Amiableneſs; not to render him Monſtrous, like armed Power without Benignity; nor Contemptible as an ignorant or defective Deity; but eſpecially to think of him according to the Notices he has given of himſelf in his revealed Will; and not to imagine, that either his Eſſence, or many times, his Operations can ſtoop to my little underſtanding.

And if I were fit to give Advice to others, it ſhould be this, that no Man preſume to demoliſh the Divine Attributes, and out of the ruins thereof, to erect unto himſelf ſome groundleſs Fancy, which like a Caſtle in the Air, hath nothing Solid to ſupport it; as if God could not be juſt to his Creatures without being imperfect in himſelf. Neither let any Man ſtand diſmayed at the Conſideration of the Fatal Period; as if God could not foreknow the Events of things, but either Divine Juſtice muſt be Arraign'd, or Man Degraded to a Machine; for as he that doth Righteouſneſs is Righteous, and by perſeverance therein ſhall undoubtedly be happy; ſo he that wilfully perſiſteth in evil doing, is Wicked; and without Repentance, muſt expect to be miſerable. But as the former of theſe will look upon Divine Preſcience as

the Cauſe of his Happineſs; ſo neither can the latter blame it, as any occaſion of his Miſery.

Let no Man think to arreſt Judgment, by abſurdly charging his own Prevarications upon Divine Perfection; as if a Man ſhould urge, that becauſe God is perfect in all his Attributes, he was therefore obliged to be wicked in all his Actions: Who would not bluſh at the Impudence and Abſurdity of ſuch a Plea? Preſcience is a Perfection which God cannot want and preſerve his Divinity; but to make it a Cauſe of Mans Miſery, were to make it an imperfection. It is no leſs eſſential to the Divine Nature than Omnipreſence; and thoſe that will dare to Retort their wickedneſs upon God, may make this Attribute as Criminal as the other. For if Men will not truſt God with the Foreknowledge of evil Actions, leſt that ſhould infer a neceſſity of ſinning, the next thing (and with equal reaſon) will be to ſeclude Divine Preſence from the inſpection of wickedneſs, leſt God ſhould that way become acceſſary thereunto. If a naked Foreknowledge of Evil, be any cauſe of it, why not actual Preſence at the Evil committed?

But the Scripture doth better inform us, concerning the Cauſes of good and evil, and

of

of Mans Happineſs and Infelicity, than the ſhallow reaſonings of ſome Perſons, who yet pretend to be wiſe above others. There we are taught, that Man's happineſs depends upon the Grace of God in Chriſt Jeſus, freely offered to reaſonable Creatures, and willingly accepted by them. That the Soul, not by any blind fatality, but by rational inducements and the uſe of proper Means, being convinced of the Evil and Danger of Sin, and directed the way to Salvation, is brought to ſuch a Belief of the Goſpel, and ſuch a voluntary Obedience thereunto, as may render the Perſon acceptable with God through the merits of our Bleſſed Saviour; * *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveneſs of our ſins, according to the riches of his Grace.*

And then the cauſe of Man's Sin and Miſery doth conſiſt, not in Divine Preſcience, but in the Prevalency of Corruption and Temptation, ariſing partly from an Original Taint, and partly from a wilful Purſuit of irregular Appetite after the pleaſures of ſenſe; by which means, the Affections being beſotted, and the heart hardened againſt Reaſons without, and Motions within, there is at laſt an inveterate and habitual Malignity brought up-

* Eph. 1. 7.

upon the Soul. * *But let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with Evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Lust and enticed,* Jam. 1. 13, 14.

These are such causes of Good and Evil, that a diligent observer may easily see and feel their Efficacy; but how a naked Prescience should operate, what others do, I know not. I can by no means understand. But this I conclude for certain, that God is Righteous in all his ways, both with respect unto the causes of Good and Evil, and their Rewards or Consequents. His Judgments will one day appear to be according to Truth, without the least diminution of his other perfections; namely, † *Unto them that are contentious and obey not the Truth, but obey Unrighteousness, Indignation and Wrath; but to them who by patient continuance in in well doing, seek for Glory and Honour and Immortality, Eternal Life,* Rom. 2. 7, 8.

FINIS.